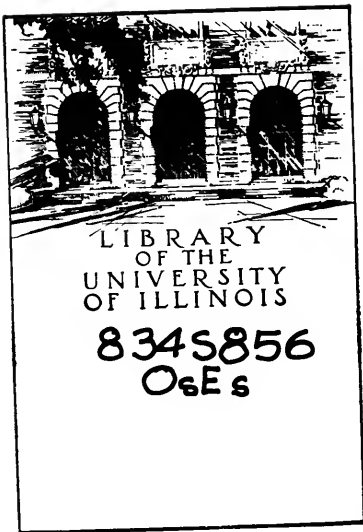


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BY
EDWARD STILGEBAUER

Author of "Love's Inferno"

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

BY
M. T. H. SADLER



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PART I
THE DEED



THE SHIP OF DEATH

PART I

THE DEED

CHAPTER I

THE rubber was over. Putnam, clean shaven, with sharply cut Yankee features, sat shuffling the cards. He leant back comfortably in the leather-covered club armchair and relit his cigar. Things were going well with him, for he was an important shareholder in the Bethlehem Steel Works, was on the board of directors and helped to control the manufacture of munitions for England.

Glowing with well-being he sat and watched his friend Franklin Price, who was reading the latest edition of the *New York Times*. At last Putnam spoke laconically:

"Steel is higher than Baltimore-Ohios now, Franklin!"

"They are," returned the other dryly. "But you must also remember that the insurance rate has gone up another $2\frac{1}{2}\%$."

Putnam had spoken in order to tease his old friend, for Price was a director of the Baltimore-Ohio and had been complaining for several weeks that railway stocks were on the down-grade. But now Putnam himself felt uneasy. He leant over the newspaper.

"Is this a new move by the Germans? Why has insurance gone up?"

"Read for yourself," replied Price.

The other two bridge players, Levick, the young engineer, and his uncle, Haynes, overheard and strolled up full of interest. Levick knew the Germans and his interest was more professional than commercial. He had studied for two years in the Technical College at Charlottenburg and was now draughtsman for one of the largest shipbuilding yards in Brooklyn. His eagerness formed a curious contrast to the nonchalance of the rest.

"Please read it aloud, Mr. Putnam."

Haynes also listened. He was unusually stout for an American, sixty years old, and the fortunate owner of a prosperous brewery in Boston. The three men stood round Putnam, who, with glasses on his nose, read aloud as follows:

"Great German submarine success off the Hook. The *Times* reports a private telegram from Amsterdam: 'Near the Hook of Holland the three cruisers *Hope*, *Lion* and *Tenacity* were today sunk by a German submarine.'"

"Three at once," remarked Price. An ironical smile played about his lips. "Hence the rise in the insurance rate."

"England has thousands of ships," replied Putnam dryly.

"Were the crews saved?" asked Haynes.

"There's nothing about that," answered Putnam.

But young Levick was deeply interested.

"Who would have thought ten years ago, when France and America were building the first submarine, that so terrible a weapon was being forged. Smart fellows the Germans!"

"It's fairly obvious, Bob," said his uncle jokingly, "that you lived two years in Berlin and were almost engaged to a German girl. But I should have cut

you out of my will, you rascal! And now you call it smart—smart to sink ships with cargoes worth millions of dollars—smart, to make the market drop twenty points in one day! Upon my word, these submarines . . . !”

“Sort of things these damned Germans would invent, submarines!” threw in Putnam.

Levick smiled a slightly superior smile. But it was Franklin Price who spoke:

“I am inclined to doubt whether the submarine is actually a German invention. The Germans’ chief talent seems to be the development of other folks’ discoveries. That at least is what happened with the steam engine, the telegraph, the telephone——”

“Not quite so fast, Mr. Price. Reiss, the inventor of the electrical telephone, came from Frankfurt.”

“I thought it was Edison,” said Putnam.

“He only perfected it, Mr. Putnam,” explained young Levick. “What happened in the case of the telephone is exactly the opposite to what Mr. Price was saying.”

But Price was not to be put off. He completed his sentence, as though no interruption had occurred:

“—— and that’s what has happened with the submarines. What about it, Levick?”

“You’re quite right, Mr. Price. France, at the end of last century, began experimenting in submarine construction.”

“France? I thought it was America. Edison, this time, surely Edison?”

“I am sorry to have to contradict you, uncle. I do not pretend to advise you about hops and malt; but you will acknowledge that I am an expert in technical matters?”

“Well, I guess the boy’s right,” acknowledged Haynes.

Levick, nothing loath, went on with his exposition: "As a matter of fact it is barely ten years since Germany started building submarines."

"They're damned murderous things, whoever invented them," snapped Putnam.

"Maybe, Mr. Putnam, but so are Mausers and Seventy-fives. Curiously enough the idea of sailing under water was a favorite one in the middle ages among pirates."

Haynes laughed.

"Pirates! I should think so. There we have it. But to think of it beginning all that way back!"

The submarine question was moving America very deeply in those days and Putnam and Price listened with interest. Levick noticed their absorption with satisfaction.

"There's an old poem, twelfth century, I believe, a German poem——"

"German, of course!" cried the other three.

"This poem tells of a cunning fellow called Marolf, who had a boat of some kind that could sail for fourteen days under water."

Haynes gave an exclamation of incredulity.

"The poem says so, uncle!"

"Perfect rubbish!"

"Rubbish, if you like; but at least it shows how old the idea is of sailing under water. Another piece of evidence is that the Swedish bishop Olaus Magnus of Upsala tells that in his time there were pirates who sailed under water in leathern vessels making great holes in the merchantman they encountered."

"Also German, I suppose?" asked Putnam.

"Why, of course!" said Haynes.

But Price was doubtful.

"If this Upsala fellow says so it looks as though they were Swedes or something of that kind."

"It makes no difference. They're all tarred with the same brush, that lot!"

Which effort at humor so overcame the worthy Haynes that he choked and was perforce silent for several minutes.

The other three had not continued their conversation for very long before the entrance of the smoking-room waiter, with a stop-press bulletin in his hand, attracted general attention. Levick took the paper and read aloud: "The three English cruisers *Hope*, *Lion* and *Tenacity* were sister ships built in 1899 and 1900 with 12,190 tons displacement and engines of 21,000 horse-power. They carried two heavy, twelve medium and fifteen light guns. The crews numbered eight hundred and nine hundred men. It is believed that seventeen hundred were drowned; the rest were saved by a Dutch steamer. The commander of the submarine was Captain Stirn of Wilhelmshaven."

For a moment no one spoke. Then:

"Seventeen hundred drowned," gasped Haynes.

"At least they were soldiers," put in Putnam.

"And how many widows will they have left?" said Price bitterly.

"Legitimate sailors' luck, anyhow," commented Levick. "Supposing it had been a passenger steamer! But that at any rate, thank God, is out of the question."

"I wonder," murmured Haynes a little doubtfully.

"No, uncle, that certainly not. I know the Germans too well. Liners! Never! It would be incredible . . . it would be murder . . .!"

After a moment's pause he asked:

"By the way, what was the name of the captain who brought off this great coup? Wasn't it Stirn?"

Price glanced at the paper which he held in his hand.

"Stirn it was. Does the name convey anything to you, Levick?"

"Yes, indeed it does; and it will to you also if you throw your minds back a little. The fellow had a position in the best New York society a little before the war. You know Lady Mabel Roade?"

"You mean the wife of the English attaché?"

"Exactly. She is, as you know, Henry Withcomb's only daughter and Withcomb is a director of the Standard Oil Company. God knows how many millions the girl is worth. This Captain Stirn, if one is to believe what one hears, was at one time a predecessor of Lord Arthur Roade."

"How do you mean 'predecessor,' Bob?" asked his uncle.

"Nothing offensive, by dear uncle, I assure you. A young lady in Mabel Withcomb's position has ten suitors to every finger, and one of the hundred was this fellow Stirn. They say that in the spring of 1914 the announcement of their engagement was daily expected. Then Lord Arthur suddenly made his appearance at the home on Long Island and the German naval captain's chances fell rapidly below par. In May Miss Withcomb married Roade and the captain, about whom there had been a good deal of talk . . ."

"What sort of talk, Bob?" asked Haynes.

"Oh, that he was working over here for the German Government."

"Oh, indeed. . . ."

"And the captain, as I was saying, went back to Europe. I can imagine old Withcomb thanking heaven that Roade turned up when he did and gave him as son-in-law a British peer, rather than a German naval officer who goes round sinking English cruisers off the coast of Holland."

"What are the Roades doing now, Bob?" asked Haynes.

"As it happens, I know fairly accurately. Lady

Roade was expecting a baby in March and engaged my sister's nurse. This woman—her name is Garrison—went to Withcomb's house on Long Island to be ready for the kid's arrival and they told her that she must be prepared to sail to England as soon after the birth as possible, as Lord Arthur is believed to have been appointed to an important post in the Foreign Office."

"I'd think twice about crossing just now, with the insurance rates going up every day," said the cautious Haynes.

But the others laughed at him.

"The ship the Roades will cross by is as safe as a soul on Abraham's bosom."

"All the same, I'd as soon stop in Boston as go traveling about with babies and women and Lord knows what, and the sea full of mines." After which reflection Haynes threw off his gloom and suggested another rubber. The others agreed and in five minutes they were deep in their game without a thought of submarines or of Lady Mabel Roade and her impending voyage.

CHAPTER II

THE weeks passed slowly by. In the great New York clubs bridge, politics and vast business profits marked the progress of a period of almost unbelievable prosperity. For did not America live in profound peace while across the ocean the old world was bleeding itself to death?

It seemed as though the legend of King Midas was coming true, for everything that was touched turned into gold before their astonished eyes. The great men of America piled up stores of wheat and maize while Europe had neither time nor men to do more than wrest the barest necessities of life from the soil, so horribly manured by the blood of its children. The warehouses on the quays held millions of bushels of grain waiting to be swallowed up by the huge steamers that carried them to London where they would be changed into money. And not only grain, but oil, cotton, meat, leather, iron, steel, explosives and the hundred and one other things of which America had, over night, become purveyor to a world that paid promptly and in good yellow gold.

Already by Christmas the balance sheets of private and limited companies had attained unheard-of dimensions. Three months had produced a turn-over ten or even twenty times as great as the turn-over of a normal year. The trades in luxuries boomed, the theatres raked in money, the profits of the great department stores rose ever higher. New York, and behind New York the whole United States, had become the first market of the world. Of this market the beating heart was Wall Street.

Germany protested: "No munitions for our enemies!"

And the mocking reply came back: "We deliver goods to whom we will. No one prevents you from placing orders with us."

And between Berlin and Washington, Washington and Berlin, the exchange of diplomatic notes went on. They were polite notes but their effect was only theoretical. Nevertheless all the time the spectre of the submarine raised slowly and ever more menacingly its Gorgon head. People spoke of English merchantmen sailing under neutral flags; there was even talk of English owners engaging American crews, in order to sow a seed of hate between the old world and the new, that should bear fruit with the first hurt done to an American citizen. And day and night, night and day, the stream of gold flowed on.

The brilliant sunshine of an April day glittered on the Hudson River. Ships of all countries flew proudly in the sparkling air their varied flags. Only the ensigns of Germany and Austria were absent, banished from the seas by England's power. At the entrance of the harbor the colossal statue of Liberty with its upraised hand of bronze, seemed to be saying: "Mine are these seas and mine are all these lands!"

Suddenly the sound of a bell rang across the crowded harbor. The *Gigantic* was ready to sail. At her masthead flew the Union Jack. She was the pride of England; before the launching of the *Imperator*, the swiftest and mightiest liner afloat. Invincible, unsinkable, she defied storm and tempest, fog and iceberg. Snow-white she floated like a mighty swan on the yellow waters of the Hudson, while upon and around her splashed the golden brilliance of the April sun.

For days, ton after ton of merchandise had been deposited into the black caverns of her hold. Now that the hour of her departure had arrived crowds forced their way toward the steamer which was to carry two thousand five hundred passengers with a crew numbered nearly seven hundred. Barely a cabin or a berth in the three classes of the *Gigantic* was left vacant. The terror of the German submarine seemed, during the winter, to have died away and in London and New York people began to speak of this terror with a superior and slightly patronizing smile. It was becoming the fashion to make heavy bets on the chances of a ship's safety. In the residences on Long Island, in the Fifth Avenue clubs, in the city cafés and offices, in the suburban boarding houses, men wagered on the probable fortune of this ship and of that. The odds averaged ten to one against disaster, so great was England's sea power, so invincible her blockade.

Motionless, majestic, the *Gigantic* lay at anchor, while the dancing wavelets of the Hudson lapped her giant sides. An old sailor leant against her polished rail. The clay-pipe in his mouth, his weather-beaten cheeks, his firm set lips, spoke the Dutchman rather than the Briton. He was first mate of the *Gigantic*, Jan van der Linden from Zandvoort on the North Sea, and for years in the service of the British steamship company. As he stood there quietly, an excited little man ran up to him and asked in broken English:

"Is this thing true?"

"Is what true, sir?"

The little man handed Jan a crumpled piece of paper. Although the sailor did not know, this was Reuben Oppenheimer, a banker of Broadway, for fifteen years an American citizen and now traveling to England. But his years of naturalization could not alter the fact

that he had been born in the Landsbergerstrasse of East Berlin.

"So you got this thing, too, sir?" said Jan at last, slowly and without emotion. "It seems that all the first-class passengers have received one. It's only a trick of the German Embassy, who wish to frighten passengers and damage the company. Nothing more than that. You can see it was posted yesterday here in New York. They are all alike, hectographed to save expense. German all over. Munitions on board. Masked guns behind the bulkheads. Yes, indeed, thousands of cases of munitions, and the *Gigantic* no liner but an auxiliary cruiser. Of course, you are scared. The only thing about it is that it doesn't happen to be true."

And Jan van der Linden smiled all over his face.

But Oppenheimer had lost his nerve. This fatal missive threw him into hopeless perplexity:

DEAR SIR:

As we understand that you have the intention of making a voyage to England by the *Gigantic* we take this opportunity of pointing out to you that the *Gigantic* carries munitions and guns, is consequently no passenger steamer but an auxiliary cruiser; and is, therefore, liable to be sunk when approaching the English coast. We are, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

The signature was illegible.

The little man's terror was not hid from van der Linden, who knew only too well the type of person who haunted the Amsterdam exchange. He realized fully that Oppenheimer was torn between a desire to win the thousands of pounds awaiting him in London and Liverpool and a cold terror lest what the letter said be true, and lest, indeed, the *Gigantic* carried guns and munitions of war. The first mate spoke coldly, almost contemptuously:

"You have only to say the word, sir. The company announced this morning that they would refund the passage money to anyone who wished to cancel his contract as a result of this rumor. It is only necessary to go to the office, just over there by the bridge. There is plenty of time."

Oppenheimer was in despair. He took his glasses from his nose and wiped them anxiously. The sweat stood out on his forehead and with his handkerchief he mopped his large bald head. Then, with a supreme effort, he made up his mind. He called to a porter:

"Get the luggage out of number 121, one big box and two suit cases, and take them on shore."

"Right, sir, anything in the hold?"

Oppenheimer shook his head, turned on his heel and hurried away.

Van der Linden lit his pipe again, watched the little man disappear into the crowd, and spat copiously into the river. He had no use for that kind of person, he who was about to celebrate his hundredth Atlantic crossing.

Yet Oppenheimer was not the only one upon whom the anonymous letter had taken effect. In the office of the Company was lined a queue of people, their tickets in their hands, waiting to get their money back. The clerks, with a polite smile, took the tickets and paid out the money with perfect nonchalance and without a word either of protest or advice.

Outside the office on the quay was a great crowd of people. The news of the warning letter had got into the morning papers, the insurance rates had jumped up five per cent and the betting on the safety of the *Gigantic* was now ten to six instead of ten to one. Gossip flew from mouth to mouth. Her cargo was worth ten million dollars. She had bullion on board for England. . . .

Through the excited throng the bookmakers pushed their way. Bet after bet they registered, promising to pay up punctually in eleven days as soon as the *Gigantic's* arrival was cabled from the other side. The figures had risen into thousands when, for the second time, the *Gigantic's* siren sounded. On board the band struck up a loud march. The decks were black with people. Cries were uttered, handkerchiefs waved, farewells shouted. The mighty engines stirred into thunderous song, steam hissed in the funnels. But still the ship lay motionless, waiting . . .

At the back of the quay a motor honked suddenly. The crowd fell rapidly to left and right and a magnificent limousine drew up at the pier. A tall, clean-shaven man, the English aristocrat in every line, leaped from the car. He was followed by a short, stout gentleman, the traditional American of fiction. Together they helped from the motor a buxom woman in nurse's uniform, carrying a bundle of white lace tied here and there with pink silk ribbon. Finally, Lady Mabel Roade herself stepped from the car. She was little more than twenty and loveliness itself. Her great dark blue eyes—eyes such as only American women have—were brighter than all the millions of her father's fortune. Her hair was more golden than the enormous wealth amassed by Withcomb in the years of a busy and successful life. She was so beautiful that the crowd forgot for a moment their bets and the anonymous letter and gazed entranced at Mabel Roade.

She took her husband's arm and together they went on board the steamer. The nurse with her precious burden followed. Henry Withcomb, left behind on the quay, removed his glasses and wiped his eyes.

"Kind of dazzles you, the sun to-day," he remarked to an acquaintance standing by.

"Put your money on her chances! Will she be sunk or will she not?"

As the voice sounded behind him, Withcomb turned sharply. "A thousand dollars on her safety!"

The bookmaker hugged himself. This was the best business he had done that day.

For a third time the siren sounded. The mighty steamer seemed to shudder. Drums rolled, the trumpets blew a shattering blast. The screws churned the shimmering waters of the Hudson. The *Gigantic* put out to sea.

Standing by the rail, Mabel Roade, golden as dawn, fluttered a white handkerchief in her tiny hand.

CHAPTER III

WHEN night fell the *Gigantic* had been for hours in the open sea. The first and second class dining saloons had filled for dinner and emptied again. The steerage passengers had finished their last meal of the day. Amid the luxury of the saloon deck wealthy New York smoked and chattered of its manifold interests. There had been little news in the latest papers before New York was left behind. The great battle of Ypres seemed to have reached a deadlock of mutual exhaustion; there was no special news from the Polish front. Talk soon strayed, therefore, away from high politics and centred round the absorptions and sensations of rich American life. In the second-class smoking-room business talk held the field. The steerage had either sought their berths or were discussing their mutual hopes and fears over the bar.

From the crew's mess-room came the plaintive whine of a concertina. The room was a large one, far below the quarter-deck and just above the *Gigantic's* hold. At this hour the place was practically empty, for the men who had been on day duty had gone to their bunks and those of the night-shift were naturally at their post. A sleepy barmaid stood behind the buffet, wiping glasses. Near her, hunched up at one of the scrubbed wooden tables, a boy of fourteen years played on the concertina. He was slowly picking out the tune of the old English folk song, "Long, Long Ago," and as he played, tears rolled down his rosy cheeks. At this moment old Jan van der Linden came into the room with a cheery:

"Good evening, Lizzie! Sixpennorth o' grog, please."

And the old man threw some money on to the counter.

The barmaid acknowledged his greeting and carefully dried her hands on her blue apron. Then she reached up to the shelf behind her for the rum bottle.

"More rum than water," cautioned Jan. "There's a bit of wind and I have the watch from midnight."

Lizzie did her best. The glass she handed to Jan was two-thirds rum and only one-third boiling water from the electric kettle whispering at her side. Jan took a sip and smacked his lips. "First rate!" he growled, and pinched Lizzie's cheek affectionately, an attention she accepted without resentment. Then the old man put his glass down on the counter and began leisurely to fill his pipe. It was at this moment that he caught sight for the first time of the boy crouched at the neighboring table. The lad had stopped playing when the old man entered.

"And what are you up to here?" he asked.

But the boy said nothing, only gazed at the old seaman with large and dreamy eyes.

"What are you gaping at me for, boy, and who are you, anyway?"

As the lad still remained silent, Lizzie came to his aid:

"His name's Pitt and this is his first voyage. He'll have a bad time probably, poor lad. The sea's getting up. Hicks took him on for the kitchen but kicked him out just before dinner because he was sick over the mashed potatoes. That's why he's crying."

Jan van der Linden laughed aloud.

"Don't take on about a thing like that, laddie," he said kindly. "That happens to every landlubber on

his first Atlantic voyage. You'll get over it all right. Where do you come from?"

"I'm not crying because o' what she said," sobbed the boy. "I don't know why I am crying, except that I am miserable."

"Homesick, poor child," smiled Miss Lizzie.

The boy took no notice of her. He turned to Jan and asked, "And who are you, sir?"

"To you I am Jan, just as to me you are Pitt," laughed the old man. "What do folks like us want with another name? We can't boast blue blood either of us. All that sort are swilling champagne upstairs."

And he jerked a clenched fist in the direction of the saloon deck.

The boy became suddenly confidential.

"My father works in a factory in Jersey City and he talks like that."

"There, you see, I was right! Give the lad a glass o' grog, Lizzie. I'll stand for it."

But Pitt refused.

"I have never touched rum or whiskey; my mother says that spirits are the source of all unhappiness."

"What unhappiness?"

"Ours, Jan. There are eleven of us and I am the oldest and since he married mother all father's wages have gone in drink. So I'm going to England, and when I have earned a lot of money I shall bring my mother and sisters over and then father can't beat them any more."

"But why go to England? I should have thought that money was easier to make in America?"

"My mother has a brother in Liverpool. He has no children. He is a cabinetmaker and earns lots of money. I am going to him, and got taken on as cook's boy for the free passage. How was I to pay my passage when there was no money at home?"

"Well, Lizzie, let's respect the lad's principles and give him a glass of milk."

Jan felt in his pocket preparing to pay.

"No, please let me pay for my own milk, Jan. Can you change that, miss?"

When he saw the five dollar bill, Jan's eyebrows went up into his head. "Five dollars! And you've just been telling us that you've no money to pay for the passage because your father drank it all, and now you go and change five dollars!"

"I was given it to-day, on board," said the lad simply.

"Oh, of course!"

"It's true, don't you believe me, Jan?"

"Why shouldn't I believe you, boy?"

Pitt explained:

"Hicks sent me into the first class to find Gilbert the steward, because the steak was ready to be served. I met a lady in the passage, who looked at me a minute and then without a word gave me five dollars. I didn't know what to do or say. I stammered thanks and was about to ask her what she wished me to do when she turned and walked away."

"Funny thing," muttered Jan thoughtfully. And Lizzie was also interested.

"Was the lady fair?"

"Yes, with golden hair like the angels in the altar piece in St. James's."

"Was she alone, Pitt?"

"No, she was with a nurse who held a baby all wrapped up in lace."

"It certainly is very odd. Do you know what the lady was, Pitt?"

The boy shook his head.

"That was Lady Mabel Roade . . ." and the old man stood a moment muttering to himself. He took

a drink of his grog, put another match to his pipe and then glanced quietly at the barmaid.

"And what do you want to ask me, Lizzie? I've seen the question in your eye the whole time I've been in here. But I guess I know what it is. You want to know whether it's true we have munitions on board."

"Yes, I should say I did want to know. But how did you guess?"

"Simply because if I have been asked that once I've been asked it three dozen times to-day."

"Well, and have we, Jan?"

"I do not know. But I always say that we have not. That is my duty. This lady Pitt was speaking about asked me the question and gave me five dollars. Yes, yes, it's true. I wanted to return the money, tried to get her to take it back, but she said, 'You must take it, because of a vow.' Do you think she is quite right in her head, Lizzie?"

"Heaven knows! This five dollar bill business . . . This one was give me by the lady, too."

And the barmaid took a bill from her pocket and showed it to Jan and Pitt.

"She pretended she wanted to see over the ship and came down here in the afternoon with the captain and gave everybody present five dollars each. Ask Mary who washes the plates, ask Smith who clears away. It's God's truth!"

Jan scratched his white head.

"It's a vow, she said to me. A vow. . . . Lots of folk are superstitious, especially at sea—and at times like these—especially at times like these. I suppose she got one of those damned letters like that little Jew fellow showed to me this morning. . . ."

"Which letters?"

"Oh, an anonymous letter of warning to passengers

not to go by the *Gigantic* because she carried munitions for England."

"So we have munitions on board! I shall never get to Liverpool."

The words came from Pitt's lips like a cry of foreknowledge. Lizzie almost screamed, "There are munitions! This is a ship of death!"

Old Jan cut in roughly:

"Don't talk like lunatics! I tell you that we have no munitions!"

"And what about all the cases put on board at night," asked Pitt.

"And the wooden boxes brought on board at the last minute? I saw them going down below, hundreds of boxes."

Jan van der Linden cut across Lizzie's moaning with decisive sharpness.

"The cases are canned meat from Chicago. Read the manifest if you don't believe me. It's all written out there."

They answered him not a word. But the boy, with his head bowed on the table, whimpered: "I shall never get to Liverpool!"

For several minutes a silence as of the grave filled the *Gigantic's* mess-room, the very shadow of death seemed to hover over the ship. Tirelessly the engines worked. One could hear no other sound, no human voice, nothing but the rattle of the wheels, the dull thud of the pistons and the deep gurgle of the Atlantic washing the steel walls of the mighty ship. Suddenly Jan spoke again:

"It was like this near Coram Island, when the *Königin Henrietta* was lost."

After a pause he went on:

"Thirty-five years ago it all happened. The *Königin Henrietta* belonged to Blankenhuis of Rotterdam and

did the trip from the Celebes to the little Sunda Islands in the Indian Ocean."

His audience counted now not only Lizzie and Pitt but quite a number of sailors just off duty and anxious for a drink. But for the moment they forgot their cold and thirst, waiting as though bewitched for the old man to go on with his story. It was generally known that long, long ago he had been saved, as though by a special providence, from death by drowning.

And Jan went on:

"She was a rotten old tub of a sailer with a cargo of tobacco and rice from Macassar for Ceram. A monsoon had come up from the East Indies and the sea was terrible. I was standing at the bow with my eye to the telescope. I was on the lookout for the palm trees of Ceram which should by right have been coming into view on the horizon. We were only three or four knots from land when——"

"What happened? What was it?"

The cry rose from Lizzie, from Pitt, from all the sailors.

The old man replied simply:

"I do not know myself, children. Was it a monstrous wave? If so, I never saw such a one in all my days. I can only tell you that I still stood there drenched to the skin and from the captain's bridge came a roar like a wild beast's: 'All hands on decks!' But it was too late. The storm had picked up the *Königin Henrietta* and simply chucked her on to a reef. They are the terror of the Indian Ocean, those coral reefs, children, there among all those little islands. . . . If you get your compass broken and lose your course, God have mercy on you! And so it was with us. I read after in the papers—Good God! what do newspaper scribblers know of a thing like that?—that she was broken clean in two and sank

down . . . down . . . with every living thing on board, children . . . with her rice and her tobacco . . . and was never seen again."

"And you?"

"Perhaps it was the devil that thrust the spar between my hands . . . the devil who sent the whaler on the spot where old Jan struggled with the storm. Perhaps the devil . . . perhaps the other thing . . . who knows? When I came to I was in a cabin, in dry clothes and fuller of brandy than I expect I shall ever get a chance of being again so long as I live. That is all I can tell you, and I felt like a man that had leaped suddenly from the fires of hell into ice cold water."

The listeners neither spoke nor moved, so intent were they on the old man's story. Jan suddenly changed his tone:

"But there! The *Königin Henrietta* was almost a wreck to start with. In Rotterdam they used to call it the floating coffin. Later on people said that the scoundrels had only sent her to sea to get the insurance money. Ceram and the Celebes are a long way from the marine courts. What has a story like that to do with the *Gigantic*? The *Gigantic's* safe enough! Here's to her!"

He raised his glass and swallowed the last mouthful of grog. The other sailors crowded round Lizzie, who secured for them the drinks they were ordering. Only little Pitt still whimpered to himself: "I shall never get to Liverpool!" But now no one heeded him.

CHAPTER IV

THE weather had turned fine again. The south-east wind which for the last forty-eight hours had ruffled the Atlantic, had subsided. Only the endless distances, the sun, the blue sky and the dark green water. Tirelessly the *Gigantic* pursued her eastward way. She was four days out from the Hudson and a third of her voyage was over.

The steerage was cheerful. Spring weather, windless air, warmth and sunlight invigorated everyone. Nobody remained in the small cabins or the gloomy saloons for even on the *Gigantic*, the greatest and most luxurious liner in the world, life in the steerage is not a bed of roses. The opportunity of being in the open air on a beautiful day was too good to miss. Seasickness was forgotten. Former sufferers breathed the keen air and felt their appetites return.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. The steerage passengers were mostly young people of the working class. English, Americans, French, Italians, Spaniards, Dutchmen and Portuguese, all were merry together, for they had been collected and enlisted for the same purpose. They were going to England to enter the munition factories at the behest of the new English Ministry of Munitions. Every language of the world except German flew hither and thither about the deck. But English predominated. The central group of the crowd was a number of young men who had improvised a game of football, of which game the rest were perforce more or less interested spectators. There was betting on the result. Now on the greens, now on the reds.

Every five minutes excitement increased as the game grew more heated. "Well played!" "Quick you, blighter!" "En avant!" "Touch down!" "Male-detto!"

The babel of voices rose and mingled.

The steerage stewards had their hands full. The young men had left New York with plenty of money and were good spenders. Why not? In America the streets are paved with gold. In England munition wages were high. Besides, who knew in these days how long he had to live? Gather ye roses . . . Make hay while the sun shines!

So they drank and sang and played their game; beer and whiskey, bottle after bottle, glass upon glass.

With her back to the wall of the cabins sat a woman of under thirty. She paid no attention to the game, to the drinking or the shouting, she seemed not to hear the songs and cheers which bade fair to go on forever. She was poorly dressed. Her large dark eyes were full of trouble; her sunken cheeks spoke of hunger. She was not an English nor an American type. For an Italian or a Spanish woman her rich long hair was too light in color. Perhaps she came from northern France, from the territory occupied by the enemy, from Lille or Arras. When one looked closely into the misery of her eyes one saw pictured, almost unconsciously, these days of universal horror—visions of burning villages, of farmsteads scored through with trenches; of devastated harvests; of flooded fields; of shattered cathedrals and ruined homes. The woman was not alone. She ignored the yelling crowd, for whom this voyage and the world war seemed a pleasant excitement. She did not, however, appear to blame them for their light-heartedness; she merely did not recognize their existence. Her dark brown cotton

blouse was open at the breast and she was suckling a tiny child, born not six weeks before in a maternity hospital in New York.

She sang softly all the while.

"Dors, dors, dors, mon . . . mon . . . mon . . .
Ton Papa est au front. . . .

Four other children, three girls and a boy, twittered like chickens round her skirts. Their ages ranged from five to two years and their sizes diminished as regularly as the pipes of an organ.

"The greens are winning, mamma!" cried the boy who was the eldest. Despite his five years he had already the sharpness of a street-Arab, and betrayed his familiarity with most of the tricks of the slum children of New York.

But the woman made no answer. Unseeing, her tearful eyes looked over the vastness of the sea. The other children were silent—half in fear—half in sympathy for their ever-weeping mother. Even the boy said nothing more.

"You are crying again, Madame Chapuisat," said a voice in French with the heavy comical accent of an English woman.

"Is it not natural, Miss Blossom?"

"Of course not. Everything will come right. Your husband is only missing!"

"Only missing!" replied the other bitterly.

"Yes, indeed, he'll turn up one of these fine days in a German prison camp. Probably he will be exchanged. Let us never give up hope. Try and pull yourself together!"

She who spoke those comforting words was a young girl of under twenty and of remarkable beauty. Sitting down she took Madame Chapuisat's hand in hers.

Despite the perfect English of her last remark she did not suggest a pure Anglo-Saxon origin. Neither fair nor dark, her eyes were full of pity as they rested on Madame Chapuisat and shone with an unearthly light. They were large eyes, beautiful and clear, but whether they were gray or green no one could tell. Whatever their color they gave a strange charm to her finely cut features and her rare complexion.

Miss Blossom appeared somehow to be unsuited to her surroundings. She was not well dressed, certainly—but neither were her clothes gaudy like those of most of the young people in the steerage, nor wretchedly poor as were those of Madame Chapuisat and her children. Yet everything she wore became her so admirably that it took on a richness and dignity far greater than its actual worth. To look at Miss Blossom, no one would ever suspect that she made all her own clothes. Nor could anyone guess how, after hard days of work she toiled through many, long, wakeful nights—sewing in a little room lit only by an oil lamp.

Her mother had been English and her father Spanish; it was perhaps this mixture of nationality which gave her that unusual beauty which is often the fruit of racial intermarriage. She had been born in St. Louis, on the banks of the Mississippi. As her parents had died when she was very young and as she had received but scanty and unwilling support from distant relatives, she had been forced to make her own way in life. As teacher, companion, lady's maid and even as an ordinary maid-servant, she had taken the rough with the smooth. But her mother's elegance and her father's pride were alike part and parcel of her being.

And now, even as she sat holding the hand of the poor French woman, she repeated:

"Come, cheer up! He will certainly be found."

The other smiled sadly and replied:

"And I implored him, Miss Blossom, so often I implored him! On my knees I begged him to stay in New York. There was no need for him to go. We were happy there and he was earning good money. And then came the summons from the French Embassy and he went away. He went laughing, Miss Blossom, laughing, as he left his wife and children, with the tri-color in his hat and the Marseillaise on his lips. That was how he left us, Miss Blossom—left us to go to his death!"

"But, dear Madame Chapuisat! . . . thousands have gone like that, thousands."

Madame Chapuisat was not moved by this obvious argument. She continued:

"Thousands. Yes, Miss Blossom, but why should he have gone? Why he, with four children already and a fifth expected? Everything was going so well. He had taken a little shop in the spring before the war broke out, a grocery shop in one of the poorer quarters on the outskirts of the city. Everything seemed to prosper, the shop was never empty. Five or ten dollars a day profit we made and were beginning to save to increase our stock. And he worked hard, Miss Blossom, so hard and so soberly. There was wine and brandy and ale in the shop but I swear to you that he never drank a drop . . . and then . . ."

"And then?"

"One evening he came home late . . . he had never done that before, Miss Blossom. It was in August, just before the war began. . . . He kissed me and I noticed that he smelled of whiskey and had a tri-colored ribbon in his buttonhole. From that moment things were different. He left his shop and his wife and his children and went to political meetings and to

the French club where he had not been since I knew him. And then . . .”

“Yes, and then?” prompted Miss Blossom gently.

But the other’s answer was to break into bitter sobs, while the children gazed at her with wide-open, miserable eyes.

Only the little boy could contain himself.

“I know, mamma,” he said, “it was then that papa beat us all, but it was your fault——”

“Mine?”

“Yes, yours, because you would not let him go; that is why he turned wicked and beat you and me and Louison and Marguerite and Françoise. He was always so good! And he was quite right and I shall go, too, when I am big and when there is a war. It is fine when they sing and the trumpets blow and the flags wave! I have got a flag, Miss Blossom, red, white and blue! Papa bought it for me.”

Madame Chapuisat smiled through her tears and Miss Blossom said:

“So you, too, have got a flag, Gaston?”

“Yes, yes, Miss Blossom, shall I fetch it?” He jumped up and ran into the cabin to get the flag which his father, on the day of his departure, had brought on the quay in New York and left as a parting gift.

“Men are all alike! He is his father over again,” sighed the mother.

For a little while the two women sat silent. The football match was nearly over and the raucous shouts of the excited spectators made conversation impossible. Gradually the noise lessened and Madame Chapuisat resumed:

“At first things went on as though he had been there. But I was expecting the little one and there came a time when I could hardly keep standing in the shop. From seven o’clock in the morning till eight at

night, Miss Blossom. And all the while the children ran wild; the whole day in the street. The eternal anxiety. . . . I had only one thought, that one or another would get under a cart or an automobile. But God watched over them."

"Had you no help in the shop?"

"Indeed I had, but you know what strangers are! Sometimes of an evening the till was short. We had a young man named Pillsbury, who came with excellent recommendations. But worse was to come. One night the till was broken open and Pillsbury had bolted. I ran for the police. But on the way I was taken bad and came to in the hospital. The child was born, but I knew nothing of it and lay a week between life and death. Not for six weeks would they let me out. Bad luck came in the interval. And all the fault of that man Brown."

"Who was he?"

"Our landlord. While I was ill, he charged me with not paying rent. I could not defend myself; at first I had nothing; then I had no money to engage a lawyer. By the time I had recovered the shop was let to others, all our stock and furniture was sold, and the children in the poorhouse. The folks there were kind and promised to help me, but when it came out that my husband was French and fighting in Europe, I was told that the French Government would support us and that we should be wise to return to Toulouse, my husband's native town."

"And you decided to go at once?"

"What was I to do, Miss Blossom? I hadn't a cent. Brown had attacked our savings-account for the balance of his rent. I told my story to the chaplain of the poorhouse, and he was sorry for me and collected enough money from his rich friends to pay my passage over. The company are giving the chil-

dren free passages. I have a few dollars over. And so we are on our way to France to look for my husband. Even if I do not find him, I get an allowance, so that we can live. And now it is your turn, Miss Blossom, to tell me why you are going to Europe!"

The girl smiled.

"Oh that is a very simple story, I'm afraid," she answered. "I've always been accustomed to globe-trotting, for my parents died when I was six and I am now nearly nineteen. I left school at fourteen and was apprenticed at once to a milliner, who also taught me tailoring. Then I became lady's maid to a French woman and picked up a little French. I was so happy with Madame de Chatelanard—but before very long—don't let's talk about it, it's too horrid. . . ."

"How horrid?"

"She was a widow with a grown-up son who lived in the house. . . . You understand?" . . .

The other nodded.

"So I left there," went on Miss Blossom, "and took charge of some tiny children in St. Louis and after that I became sort of deputy housekeeper in a boarding house in Chicago, and after that a "young lady" in a photographer's at Boston, then a dentist's assistant in New York. . . . So you see I've been all over, but I never stayed long in one place because men . . . they are so shameless always . . . and it always ended with me in the street because I would have nothing to do with them. So then I made up my mind to try my luck in Europe and put an advertisement in the *Tribune*."

"With success, then?"

"Oh, I got a heap of replies, but they were none of them any good. It was quite easy to read between the lines the real purpose of the proposed arrangement. At the last minute, when I had almost given up hope

and was about to go, as so often before, to an employment agency, I got a wonderful offer."

"That sounds almost unbelievable these days."

"To go to London to a large house in the West End as companion and "deputy"; "deputy" was the word used in the letter. Board and lodging and £60 a year. The conditions were pleasant manners, good appearance and nice clothes. You can read the letter for yourself."

Madame Chapuisat shook her head as she read, what seemed to her, a somewhat suspicious invitation.

"And you are going straight off to England," she asked, "with only this letter to go upon?"

The girl seemed for a moment embarrassed. Then she replied:

"Oh, no, I came to terms with an agent in New York, called Darton. He is on board at this moment on his way to England. I was to have my passage paid second class, but when we got on board I found I was put in the steerage. Darton claimed that I ought to pay the difference, but I thought I would as soon keep my few dollars and stay where I was."

At this moment a stout woman in nurse's costume stepped forward from behind the projecting base of one of the funnels. It was Miss Garrison, but instead of the bundle of lace she carried a large parcel in her arms.

"You are Madame Chapuisat?" she asked the astonished French woman.

"Yes."

"My mistress has told me to give you this parcel."

"I do not know your mistress. Who is she?"

"That does not matter. I have merely to carry out my instructions."

And with these words, Nurse Garrison handed the

parcel to Madame Chapuisat and disappeared without another word.

Full of excitement the two women hurried to the Chapuisat cabin in order to open the parcel. It contained children's underclothing, stockings and shoes, all of the best quality and brand new. Among the garments was an envelope which Madame Chapuisat, thinking to find a message, tore open eagerly. But the envelope contained no letter, only bills for a hundred dollars. Poor Madame Chapuisat burst into tears. Not since a brutal landlord had appropriated all her savings had she seen so much money at one time.

CHAPTER V

IN the smoking-room of the second-class passengers two rather curious-looking men were talking over a bottle of wine. Outside the rain streamed down, the grayness of the Atlantic losing itself in the desolation of the storm. The two men had laid aside the dice boxes with which they had for some time been amusing themselves.

"Another bottle, steward," called one of the two in thick and broken English. No sooner had the steward gone to fulfil this order than the speaker turned to his companion and spoke rapidly in Dutch:

"Let us get this matter fair and square between us, Darton."

"By all means, my dear van Houten, but I don't like your terms."

Van Houten shrugged his shoulders.

"Then the business is off," he remarked coolly.

For a while there was silence. With the fingers of one hand van Houten played nervously a soundless tune upon the table, while with the other hand he fidgeted with the showy gold watch-chain with its superfluity of dangling seals. Darton lay back in his chair with an expression of boredom. He gazed through the window of the saloon into the unbroken grayness. Gently, through his teeth, he whistled a tune. In his bright red tie was a pin with a pearl nearly as large as a hazel nut; on every one of his blunt and rather dirty fingers shone a jeweled ring. He was a nasty looking man, fat, freckled and with a fringe of rusty hair round his bald and yellow head.

He was clean-shaven, like an American gentleman, but there was something furtive, at once servile and hectoring, in his small green eyes.

Van Houten, in contrast, was almost an Adonis. There was only one street in Europe from which he could have come and that was the Jodenbreestraat in Amsterdam. His name had been van Houten for only ten years, since, in fact, he had left Rotterdam for the United States. His father's slop-shop, in which Levi van Houten had been born, still showed the original family name *Primeiro Benboker*. Life is harsh to children in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam, and van Houten's eyes, almost lost under the heavy lids, told of misery and hunger in one of those terrible little alleys behind the Jodenbreestraat. The eleventh of a family of seventeen Jewish children he had, even as a small boy, begun to suffer from the eye trouble which attacks nearly every baby born in the Ghetto and from which many become permanently blind. Levi van Houten, like his fellows, had suffered from the fine diamond dust with which the Amsterdam Ghetto is infected. At the age of thirteen, with a knowledge of Dutch and Yiddish, his father sent him out with one of those hand-carts which, from early morning till late at night, are to be seen in the streets of Amsterdam. He sold dried fish and vegetables, fruit and any other oddments of garbage thrown out upon the city's quays. Day after day the boy toiled through the streets, returning at night to the court in which his parents lived; probably he would have spent his whole life there had not fate taken the matter out of his hands. The opportunity was provided by an outbreak of typhus which swept like a tempest through the slums of the Jewish quarter. Young Levi was struck down and taken to the hospital. There a Jewish doctor saw signs of talent in him and got him a post in an exporting house

in Rotterdam. By these people he was sent, at the age of twenty-five, to America, to buy cotton in the south. He worked tirelessly day and night, denying himself sleep and pleasure in order to master the intricacies of his business. Whereas at first he bought only for his employers, he began gradually to buy a little for himself, then rather more, and finally for himself alone. And now, as Levi van Houten, he had become one of the best known cotton brokers in the Southern States. He was on his way to Holland via England in order to bring off the greatest piece of business in his life, a business only made possible by the war. Darton was to be his agent.

The wine had now arrived and the steward was once more busy at his desk in the corner of the room. Van Houten spoke again as before, in a low tone.

"I think you forget the risk that I shall run in Rotterdam, Darton. Fifteen per cent is the utmost I can pay, for after all, you will be in no danger in England."

"Twenty per cent's my lowest figure," replied the other. "Supposing the English government takes it into his head to declare cotton contraband? What about risks for me then?"

"They won't do anything of the kind. You have merely to deliver the stuff to me in Rotterdam. The rest is my responsibility. And for that little share I offer fifteen per cent."

"Very well. You must find somebody else then. Twenty per cent or nothing."

Van Houten shrugged again.

"In that case I shall cut you out altogether, Darton," he replied offhandedly. "I shall ship direct to Rotterdam."

The other smiled an evil smile.

"Excellent! Try it, that's all. Is it possible that

you have not read the last number of the *Cotton Market*?"

Van Houten fidgeted uncomfortably. He had missed the number in question of the paper mentioned by Darton and he knew his opponent was no bluffer. But van Houten was not a Jew for nothing and he went on with the Jew's habitual caution.

"As a matter of fact I did miss that number. But how does that affect the question?"

Darton drew the paper from the pocket of his loud check suit. "Bottom of page 2. Private telegram from New Orleans."

Van Houten peered at the text with his shortsighted eyes. For a moment he could not find the paragraph he was seeking. While he crouched mumbling over the paper, Darton sat smiling contemptuously. At last the Dutchman gave a little gasp and read aloud:

"'It's reported from a wholly reliable source that the English government has bought up the entire cotton harvest of the southern states.' Damnation! It cannot be true!"

"Why not? England's finances are all-powerful. Unless England wishes, not a single bale of cotton can go to Rotterdam. Well, are you now going to ship direct from America, or is poor old Darton a little bit of use after all? Only twenty per cent!"

Van Houten gave in.

"You've got me there. And now for details. I shall establish a firm in Rotterdam called 'Providentia Limited,' and you will be Providentia's buyer in London."

Darton nodded. Van Houten continued:

"The stuff will leave for the continent by the next steamer after it is purchased."

"Against cash payment?"

Van Houten writhed.

"Damn you!" he snarled, "I pay at six months, as you know quite well."

"In peace time perhaps, but not nowadays. I can get as many orders as I like from Holland on a cash basis in view of this notice in the *Cotton Market*."

Van Houten knew that he was cornered. This fellow held him in the hollow of his hand. But he made one more attempt.

"At three months, then, Darton."

Darton laughed aloud.

"Do you think I'm a fool, my dear van Houten? Cotton for Holland with Cologne as ultimate destination is worth its weight in gold. The Germans will come running for it, out of sheer patriotism. They want your cotton for explosives. There's the rub. . . ."

"The Germans are an ingenious people. . . ."

"All right. Wait for their genius to find some way of turning German straw into American cotton. I understand they've discovered some way of making butter out of sewage. Only for God's sake don't bore me with business any more. Let's have another game."

But van Houten did not respond. His mind was full of the millions ready to the hand of Providentia Limited and Darton's chatter of dice and drink barely penetrated his consciousness. He sat and added and multiplied and added again. On a million gulden turn-over the fellow would earn two hundred thousand, and earn it without the least risk, by a mere lifting his hand, so to speak. Two hundred thousand of what rightfully belonged to Providentia! Merely, as it were, for readdressing a letter. Darton was not buying the stuff. But there must be somebody in London, otherwise there could be no cotton. Instinct said that

the news in the *Cotton Market* was true. With a bitter effort he resigned himself.

"Done with you, Darton!"

The other responded warmly: "Cash payment and twenty per cent commission. I'm your man. Shake hands!"

They filled their glasses and drank.

"To the first million!"

"Here's to the war!"

And indeed the war had brought a business such as neither could have dreamed of.

The two men plunged into an animated discussion of details. The second bottle of wine rapidly emptied. Darton rose to ring for the steward, who had left the room, to order whiskeys and sodas. But at this moment the steward came in again and, walking up to the table at which the two men sat, asked:

"You are Mr. Lewis Darton, are you not, sir?"

"Certainly I am."

There was a touch of insolence in the reply, such as might be expected from a man who has more than once been questioned as to his personality and seeks to make up by assurance for some fundamental uneasiness. The steward spoke again:

"If you are Mr. Darton I have been instructed to give you this letter. There is no answer."

Darton took the letter and examined the dainty little envelope addressed in a distinguished and feminine hand. A faint scent of heliotrope suggested that the note paper had lain near a sachet or near some highly-scented soap. Darton did not fail to notice these characteristics. A self-satisfied smile crept over his lips. From a woman, of course. He turned to van Houten.

"An assignation, I think, as is proper on a steamer!"

Van Houten's answer was a slightly contemptuous smile. Darton opened the letter and read:

DEAR SIR,

I address you thus out of respect to the lying convention of polite society, and for that reason only. I am given to understand that you are engaged on a piece of very revolting business. Whatever may be your intentions with regard to Miss Blossom, be good enough to abandon them. You may be appearing before the throne of God sooner than you expect. From one whose care is salvation.

Darton laughed aloud.

"Good Lord!" he cried. "Read this, van Houten. There must be a lunatic on board!"

With considerable difficulty van Houten deciphered the letter. But he did not join the other's merriment.

"Who is this Miss Blossom?" he asked. "And what have you to do with her?"

"She is the delusion of a lunatic. I know of no such person."

There was a note of doubt in van Houten's next remark:

"You know of no such person? . . . You have not gone back to that old business of yours?"

Darton laughed again.

"My good man, can't you see that the letter is palpably written by one who is crazy?"

Van Houten's continued incredulity put Darton in a fury. He turned to the steward:

"I insist on knowing who gave you this letter. I shall go and complain to the captain. Whoever wrote it ought to be reported to the ship's doctor!"

The steward replied quietly:

"You will have to ask the stewardess Watson in the first class, sir. I received the letter from her." And he walked away without more ado.

Darton was now striding up and down the smoking-room, still laughing, gesticulating with his hands.

"Crazy, crazy, crazy . . ." he repeated ceaselessly.

Van Houten sat silent. Apparently lost in thought

he gazed before him with unseeing eyes. Suddenly he asked:

"What was the last sentence in the letter? Something about appearing before the throne of God before you expected. I know what that means. It means we are carrying munitions and that the *Gigantic* will be sunk."

Darton growled, angrily. "Don't talk rot! The woman's crazy."

But van Houten seemed already to feel creeping over his body the icy water of the Atlantic.

CHAPTER VI

AMONG the smart first-class passengers was a striking and unusual figure. In New York he had found it difficult to even get on board at all. The official who was examining the tickets summed him up as some poor harmless lunatic, tired of life in common-sense America and seeking relief in one of the older countries of Europe, who had, by some means or other, collected money for a steerage passage. Picture his astonishment, therefore, when this curious being produced a first-class ticket. Nothing could be done. The man had obviously paid and had as much right as anybody else to travel. The official thought he must be a crank, for there are many of one sort or another in America. After all, it was not his business how the man dressed, and provided he made no disturbance and left other people alone he was no concern of the steamship authorities. Although barely thirty years of age he looked like a figure risen from some vanished century. He wore a cowed monkish robe tied with a hempen rope; on his naked feet were sandals and his hair and beard were fair and unshorn. He spoke to no one. The costly dishes served at table barely attracted his notice. He only ate to any extent of the fruit which came with the dessert. No coffee, tea or wine passed his lips. When the weather was fine he would walk for hours up and down the deck, reading incessantly in the New Testament which was never seen out of his hands.

His cheerful fellow-travelers nicknamed him, among themselves, John the Baptist. But in three days every-

one was used to him and paid him no more attention. It was in truth a strange contrast. On the one hand, luxury, fine clothes, jewels, light love-making, music and dancing; on the other, the wasted face of the stranger, his sad smile and the far-away look in his great brown eyes which seemed to give utterance to all the sorrows of the world. Like a messenger from some other sphere he walked the decks of the *Gigantic* among the crowd of laughing and thoughtless human beings. One evening shortly after dinner, Lord Arthur Roade fell by chance into conversation with the Baptist. The Englishman was anxious at the curious change which had come over his wife since the *Gigantic* had left New York. She was no longer the cheerful girl of the Long Island home, but shut herself in her cabin and refused to mix with the crowd in the dining saloon or the drawing-room, although many of the folk on board were acquaintances and even friends. Hour after hour she would sit at the table of her private cabin, writing in a little note-book which, carefully enclosed in a small waterproof case, she carried with her wherever she went. In vain had Lord Arthur attempted to solve the secret of this book. His hints and even his frank questions she had met with an absent-minded, but none the less firm refusal, given as though her mind were far away. And then there came a day when he made a disquieting discovery. Entering her cabin he saw, hanging over her bed, a crucifix. Where it had come from he could not think. Had she brought it secretly with her from New York? It seemed incredible, for among her friends Withcomb's daughter had always passed as more or less of a free thinker. The affair was all the stranger because Nurse Garrison told him that Lady Mabel, on her knees before this crucifix, would pray passionately for her child, the tears standing in her eyes.

The ship's doctor, on being consulted, sought to soothe the anxious husband. Women, especially women from wealthy and pleasure-loving circles, often suffered such nerve crises after giving birth to a child. Doubtless natural maternal anxiety had been intensified by the receipt of the anonymous letter before the sailing of the boat. With such platitudes Lord Arthur had perforce to be content, but he determined, when they reached London, to consult a specialist.

Strange it was that in this anxiety he felt himself drawn more and more strongly toward the Baptist. The two seemed to meet at every moment of the day. Lord Arthur felt himself getting nervous and irritable. The man was an obsession. Was he a ghost? Or was it all unreal? Was this not the *Gigantic* crowded with people? Was there no war? Was he himself perhaps not Lord Arthur Roade, late attaché at Washington, now on his way to the Foreign Office in London? He tried to laugh the matter off, but every moment the lure of the Baptist proved stronger.

The sea was slightly rough, but the Baptist as usual strode up and down the promenade deck, reading his New Testament, talking softly to himself. With evening the sky had cleared and now that the sun had set, a silver twilight lay over the Atlantic. From the saloons and cabins of the ship the electric lights streamed out into the gathering dusk. The ship gave a slight lurch. The Baptist reeled a moment and the book fell from his hand. Lord Arthur stooped and picked it up.

"Thank you," said the Baptist, taking the book once more.

"What are you reading?"

"The Apocalypse. In these days, it should be read by everybody."

Lord Arthur stared in astonishment, while an unearthly smile lit up the features of the speaker.

"I have never read the Apocalypse," said Lord Arthur at last.

"Now above all others is the time," replied the other solemnly, "but I am boring you . . ."

The Baptist turned to go. One little word from Lord Arthur and the conversation between them would never have taken place. But that word was not spoken. The Baptist, reading the other's look, checked himself and asked:

"You are Lord Arthur Roade? Everyone on board knows you, points you out as the chief personality on the ship, but despite that you have never read the Apocalypse."

"Let us go inside," said Lord Arthur gently. "It is getting rather cold."

"First let me introduce myself," replied the Baptist, "my name is de Chatelanard, and I am the leader of the Christian Scientists of Philadelphia."

"You are a Frenchman, then, and on your way to fight for France?"

"My name sounds French, I know, but I am an American. I come from St. Louis; my mother still lives there. My father has been dead for many years. As to why I am traveling, it is said in the Apocalypse: 'He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.' God forbade me to fight in this war, wherefore I should not be now going to fight, even if I were as French in nationality as I am in name."

The two men were now in one of the saloons, which happened to be empty. They took their seats on a sofa that ran along one of the sides.

"May I offer you something?" asked Lord Arthur.

"Nothing, thank you."

"Not even a cigar?"

"Not even a cigar."

"You are an ascetic then?"

"For three years."

"Why for three years?"

"To be more exact, it will be three years on June the twenty-fourth. Until the twenty-fourth of June, nineteen hundred and twelve, I lived like any other member of that American society for which money and the value of money have no meaning."

"On that date, then you felt some divine call?"

"No," replied the other, "but I became conscious of my sins, and that was the first step."

"If it is not an intrusion to ask . . . ?"

"If you are interested, I will gladly tell you. Like other rich young men I lived a riotous life in St. Louis. I was brought up by my mother and mothers are often indulgent. Wine, women and gambling were the main interests of my life and no flower bloomed except for me to pluck. When I was only twenty years old I had a great experience. My mother took a young girl into her house who was anxious to perfect herself in French——"

"Oh, I see, the old story—a woman!"

"I took her to be a woman, Lord Arthur, and I treated her as such. But I was wrong, for the first time in my life I was wrong. She was a saint."

"What do you mean?"

"She was the most beautiful girl I have ever seen in my life, the most beautiful you can imagine!"

"So that's where the saintliness lay?"

The Baptist ignored the interruption and went on:

"Even her name was unusual. She was simply called Blossom; in name as well as in soul, she was a flower."

"The name is not so rare as all that!"

"Perhaps you are right. I only know that I was fascinated by the name and regarded it as a sort of symbol. But despite all that . . ." He paused, but pulled himself together, "I treated the saint as I had been accustomed to treat others of her sex. Then did she rise and depart from me and left my mother's house."

Lord Arthur found it difficult to maintain a becoming gravity. It was so obvious that the poor fellow was a lunatic.

"And what happened then? I suppose you went on to search for another saint?"

"That was my intention, Lord Arthur, and I laughed when she left us; I felt sure that I should find consolation elsewhere. But I was not in a condition to do anything of the kind."

"How do you mean 'not in a condition?'"

"On the following morning I was unable to rise from my bed, for God had laid His hand heavily upon me."

"You were ill, then?"

"I lay for six weeks in a raging fever and from those weeks of illness I emerged as I am to-day. I vowed to leave St. Louis and become a Christian Scientist, for which purpose I went to Philadelphia. There, among fellow believers, I came to an understanding of the strength which removes mountains."

"The strength?"

"The strength of prayer, Lord Arthur, or, more simply, the strength of the human will. The secret of the world is that the man whose will is strongest can compel others weaker than he. Wherefore I sought by prayer and fasting to attain to this will, knowing that by this means the sufferings of the world and with them the war would come to an end."

"The war, too?"

"Certainly, Lord Arthur. But the victory of the Lamb shall not be fulfilled until the days of the Beast are ended. John, the author of Revelations, has prophesied this war. If you read the thirteenth chapter of that book you will understand whom he means by the Beast. . . . But all this is for the moment beside the point. . . . As I was saying, I set myself armed with the power of will, to carry out a definite mission. I saw that it was my duty to find once more the girl whom my sins had driven from my mother's house. Wherefore I wander without rest or quietness over the face of the earth, seeking this Miss Blossom that I may make good to her the harm that I did her. I have known devout people in Philadelphia who can call the dead from their graves and question them as did Samuel for Saul in the cave of Endor."

Lord Arthur could no longer repress a slight smile. The Baptist noticed this at once, guessed that the Englishman considered him mad, and said calmly:

"It is natural enough that you should take me for a lunatic, for is not the loss of all metaphysical sense the fundamental disease of this terrible time? Such days as these are only credible if it be admitted that faith is dead. The vast majority of human beings are still at the stage of development at which I stood before my illness, before I went to Philadelphia. Perhaps you do not believe in the miracle?"

"What miracle?" asked Lord Arthur.

"The miracle of the Revelation, which is certainly at hand and with which this war is to end."

"So you conceive that the end will be a miracle?"

"Not *a* miracle, Lord Arthur, but *the* miracle, the miracle of trans-substantiation. The war will end with the coming of the Lamb and with the final downfall of the Beast. . . . There are, in these days few who are chosen—few to whom the truth is revealed—

but the hour is coming, the hour of that little hill in Galilee, of which the Gospel speaks.”

The Baptist rose and began striding up and down the gorgeously decorated room.

“The hour of the little hill in Galilee . . .” he repeated.

Lord Arthur shuddered, and in that moment the face of his wife rose before his eyes. He bade the Baptist a brief farewell and left the room with his mind made up to prevent, by every means in his power, any meeting between Lady Mabel and this unearthly being.

CHAPTER VII

PITT was ill. Delirious with fever he lay in one of the cabins near the crew's mess-room, set aside for such eventualities. At first his actual complaint had defied diagnosis. A day or two before he had complained of great pain in the right groin. The doctor had examined him but had found it impossible to say what was definitely amiss. From hour to hour the little boy grew worse until it was quite evident to the doctor that the child was suffering from appendicitis. What was to be done? The ship's doctor was no surgeon; even if he were, how could a ticklish abdominal operation be carried out amid the vibrations of the *Gigantic*? The boy was left to the mercy of heaven. As he stood by the bedside, taking Pitt's temperature and feeling his pulse, Doctor Kallaway shook his head gravely.

"Very bad," he muttered to the nurse-stewardess in charge. "I don't like this temperature. Every quarter of an hour force a little piece of ice between his lips. Do you understand? And every half hour renew the ice packing round his body. I shall be back in two or three hours."

As he turned to go, the doctor's eye fell on the little table standing near the bed. On the table were a plate of strawberries, a bottle of wine, cakes, oranges, a slice of pineapple.

"What's all this litter?" he asked sharply. "Clear all that stuff away. What's the good of that kind of thing when the lad can't touch a morsel of anything whatever?"

"Nurse Garrison brought them all in," replied the stewardess.

"Who is she?"

"Lady Mabel Roade's nurse."

The mention of Lady Mabel smoothed the doctor's face into contentment with comical rapidity.

"Indeed!" he remarked. "Very interesting!"

"Lady Mabel Roade had heard of Pitt's illness and sent Nurse Garrison to say that he must lack for nothing and that she would be responsible for all expenses."

"She has a heart of gold!" murmured the doctor. "Let us hope, stewardess, that we can pull the little fellow through sufficiently for him to profit by Lady Roade's generosity."

With these words he left the cabin. The stewardess moved the little table away from the bedside, but as she did so the boy tried to raise himself in bed.

"You mustn't move, Pitt," whispered the stewardess, leaning over him. "Let me give you a little piece of ice."

The lad sank back without understanding, possibly without even hearing, what she said.

"I shall be back in a moment, Pitt. I must just run and get a bite of supper. So lie quite still like a good boy."

And she slipped away.

Even in the distant world to which his fever had carried him, Pitt felt the relief of the ice-bandage round his body. The pain grew less and the temperature, although it stayed obstinately high, did not rise. The boy lay motionless. On the wall behind his bed the green-shaded electric lamp shone dimly. Shadows crouched in every corner of the cabin, grotesque, mocking shadows cast by the bed and the other objects in the room. On the wings of the fever Pitt's imagination flew far away. He was back once more in his

home in Jersey City among the squalor and quarreling and blows. He was in England, in his uncle's workshop, earning money for his mother and sisters, so that they might start a new life. He was before the altar of St. James's, gazing at the golden-haired angels and promising to be a good boy and never touch wine or spirits. Very gradually the fever visions thinned and faded and he became distantly aware of the murmur of the waves, of the sullen thunder of the vessel's engines.

He had been alone about a quarter of an hour when the door of the cabin opened softly. Silhouetted against the brilliant light that streamed in from the corridor, stood the Baptist. He was bareheaded and the light spun into fine gold the edges of his hair and beard.

The boy stared as though at an apparition from another world. He struggled to raise himself. A cool, soft hand, like the hand of a woman, was laid on his burning forehead and he felt himself forced, by will rather than by physical strength, back once again on to the pillow.

"You must lie still, Pitt," said the Baptist gently.

"Who are you? Your hand makes me feel better."

"Who I am is of no matter. As for my hand, it is a hand of healing."

And the boy smiled.

The Baptist sat down on a stool by the side of the bed, his hand still resting on the child's forehead.

"Do you feel better, Pitt?"

"Much better."

For a long while complete silence reigned. The only sound was the muffled ticking of Pitt's watch from a box which stood upon the table. At last the Baptist spoke again:

"Are you afraid of death, Pitt?"

The boy stared at the strange figure and seemed to absorb every detail of his appearance. At last, as though fascinated by the eyes of the Baptist, he whispered:

"No, sir, I am not afraid of death."

"You are right, Pitt: 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' " The boy's eyes lit up. Some recollection of past visits to St. James's flickered across his mind.

"Do you know, sir, whether it is true?"

"Whether what is true, Pitt?"

"That we shall all be lost."

"Why?"

"Because there are munitions on board."

After looking earnestly at the boy for a moment or two the Baptist answered gently:

"I do not know, Pitt, but it does not matter. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father in heaven. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

"I understand," replied the boy, and in his voice was a great weariness.

"I shall give you another little piece of ice, Pitt," said the Baptist, "and then you will go to sleep."

"I have not slept for days."

"But now you will go to sleep."

As he rose and walked to the table upon which the ice was standing he looked, in the dim green light, fantastic and unreal.

"Can you walk, sir," asked Pitt, still in the grip of the fever, "like He did on the sea?"

"If we have faith, Pitt, you or I or anyone can walk as He did."

As the Baptist thrust the little piece of ice between the boy's lips he asked :

"You are no longer afraid?"

"No, sir."

"Then sleep."

The cooling hand lay once more on Pitt's forehead; the minutes passed; the watch ticked; the Atlantic murmured; the engine throbbed; and the Baptist stood by the sick child's bed with his right hand on the fevered forehead. In his left he held the Testament and read endlessly on, his lips moving silently as though he were sending some magical stream of comfort over the sufferer. It was the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew that he was reading :

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of the kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

At last the Baptist withdrew his hand, for the boy was asleep. The breath came quietly and with regularity. After bending once over the bed and smiling his strange, unearthly smile, the visitor glided silently from the room.

When, a few minutes later, the stewardess returned, she stood in delighted amazement by the bed, gazing at the sleeping boy, on whose forehead were pearls of sweat, and whose breath came with quiet regularity. She sat on the stool in the corner of the cabin and waited. As she sat, the menacing rumors that had hung over this voyage crowded into her mind. She had heard of the anonymous letters, she knew of the gossip that the ship was carrying munitions. And yet, in the midst of this lurking horror, sleep, like an angel of peace, had visited this sick room. . . . "Wherefore abide these three, Faith, Hope and Charity, for the greatest of these is Charity." . . . Why did these words run in her head, here in this cabin by the side of the sick child? Rising and looking down on the boy's peaceful face, she felt the cloud of uneasiness lift from her mind. Once safely in England she would see her children and her husband, and the *Gigantic* was not far from England now.

"Father into Thy hands . . ." she breathed.

At this moment the doctor entered the cabin. The shade was removed from the light and the two looked at the sleeping boy.

"Sleep!" whispered the doctor. "Sleep and perspiration! It is amazing! It is little short of a miracle. Perhaps to-morrow he may be able to eat something. . . ."

And the doctor vanished.

"Little short of a miracle!" repeated the stewardess, as she sat down to wait for the colleague who was to relieve her.

CHAPTER VIII

IT was Captain Hastings's habit, so far as he could manage it, to visit and inspect personally every day the various departments of the huge ship over which he ruled. He was a typically trim English sailor, whose jovial character was not belied by the short pipe always between his teeth. Through between forty and fifty years old, his short and thickly-set frame was muscular and young, thanks to the sea air and his love of sport when on shore. He was universally beloved by his subordinates, by the directors of the company and by those first-class passengers who were fortunate enough to make his acquaintance during the *Gigantic's* voyages. He had earned the important command of the *Gigantic*, thanks to his coolness and skill in saving the *Victorious* from shipwreck off the coast of Canada some years before. No one on board, passenger or sailor, had suffered more than a slight scare and not a case of the cargo had been lost. It had also happened (and this was the second recommendation) that Hastings was on board the ill-fated *Titanic*, though in the capacity of an ordinary passenger. In that terrible disaster he had been prominent in organizing the work of rescue and such few as escaped undoubtedly owed their lives to his efforts.

And so to him was entrusted the onerous and responsible task of commanding the *Gigantic* during the dangers of war-time. On this particular morning his daily round led him first to the kitchen where the steerage dinner was being prepared. He insisted on

tasting the stew upon which the negro cook Elias was engaged, pronounced it unbearably tough and gave the officer who had charge of the purchase and arranging of the meals for the various classes on board a severe reprimand. The captain next found fault with the condition of the floor and with the polishing of some of the brasswork. The engineers and the stokers then claimed his attention so that it was quite some time before he emerged on to the steerage deck. He called to the purser, who was passing, and asked:

"There is, I believe, a Miss Blossom traveling in this class?"

"Yes, sir. A very pretty young lady."

Hastings smiled. "That's a compliment from you, you rascal. . . .!"

"Well, sir, I mean it as a compliment," grinned the purser. "She is absolutely . . . Talk of the devil! Here she comes."

He turned and walked after the girl, who had at that moment emerged from the cabin.

"Miss Blossom! The captain would like to speak to you."

The girl blushed and stood waiting as Captain Hastings walked up to her. He, knowing nothing of Miss Blossom's experiences with the various men she had encountered in the United States, was slightly embarrassed by the girl's evident unwillingness to converse.

"You mustn't be afraid of me, my dear young lady," he said, "I'm not a man-eater. I merely have a message to give you from a lady who shall be nameless. She wishes you to accept this first-class ticket and would be glad if you would transfer your belongings from the steerage to the saloon deck."

"But, Captain Hastings . . .," she began, her suspicions definitely aroused, "I can hardly accept such a proposal. I cannot afford to go first class and such

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an invitation can hardly have been prompted by pure loving-kindness. . . ."

There was a tinge of bitterness in her voice.

"Indeed, you are making a mistake," replied Hastings. "Any hidden motive is out of the question. The lady said to me that she was anxious to remove you from certain influences while on the voyage. What she meant I do not know. As for being reluctant to accept the favor, I can assure you that the lady is enormously rich. And now that I have fulfilled my mission I would ask you to excuse me."

With these words the captain saluted and moved away.

Miss Blossom hastened to consult Madame Chapuisat, who was sitting in her usual corner, the baby asleep in her arms. When she had heard what had happened the French woman said:

"This is without doubt the same benefactor, Miss Blossom, who sent me those clothes for the children and the hundred dollars. It is Lady Mabel Roade, I am sure of it."

"No doubt you are right, Madame Chapuisat. At first I was rather suspicious, I thought there might be something behind it. But what ought I to do?"

"Why, accept, of course, Miss Blossom! And be thankful for your good fortune. I shall miss you dreadfully. You have done such a lot to cheer us up."

The girl thought for a few moments and realized that the other was giving her good advice.

"I shall not be so very far away," she replied at last. "After all, I am only going to another deck, and I can come down often to see you and the children. Do you think I had better go at once?"

"Certainly. Enjoy your good luck as quickly as you can. I will come and help you pack your things."

Before she went, Madame Chapuisat called her little

boy to her. He was peering over the edge of the great coal shaft which went right down into the depths of the *Gigantic*.

"Now you are not any of you to go near the shaft, Gaston!" cautioned the mother.

"I will promise not to climb, mamma, and I will hold on to the railing all the time."

The smaller children, in a little group on the deck, were happily playing with pieces of colored foil, torn from the necks of wine bottles and given them by a friendly steward. Gold and silver, red and green, blue and yellow, the fragments of foil pleased the children by their glitter.

"You will take care of the others, Gaston?"

"Yes, mamma."

"And promise me not to climb?"

"I promise, mamma."

Madame Chapuisat, the baby in her arms, followed Miss Blossom into the cabin. She had not been gone very long before Gaston, as is the way of elder brothers, began to tease the little ones. He took their playthings from them and began throwing them in the air. At first the babies cried, wanting their pieces of foil back again. But then it began to amuse them to see the shining things thrown up into the air. And no one heeded the little group. All at once, one of the fragments of foil—the red one, particularly beloved by Louison—was thrown too high into the air, sailed over the brass railing, and fell into the shaft. The little girl broke into a wail, ran unsteadily toward the shaft and began to clamber up the railing. Gaston, paralyzed with fright, stood watching, as his little sister leaned further and further over the edge of the abyss.

"I think not, child!"

A hand grasped Louison by the back of her dress,

lifted her off the railing and put her safely on the deck. It was the hand of the Baptist.

"Are you all alone, children?"

They were speechless, gazing at the curious man in the brown robe, with the long, fair hair and beard.

Then the Baptist seated himself on one of the deck bosses and said: "Come to me, children, and I will tell you a story until your mother returns."

He took Louison on his knee, while Gaston crouched at his feet and the other two little girls stood on either side of him. A few people crowded curiously round; but he looked over their heads to the infinity of sea as though unconscious of the sailors going about their work, or of the silent group of watchers. Then, turning to the children, he said:

"There were brought unto Him little children that He should put His hand upon them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said: 'Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. And He laid his hands on them and departed thence.'"

At this moment Madame Chapuisat forced her way into the centre of the group. An obscure anxiety about the children had caused her to hurry back from the cabin.

"Is this your mother, children?" asked the Baptist.

But the little ones answered no word and he, reading as always in his Testament, went his way.

CHAPTER IX

DARTON was mystified and angry. He could not imagine whither Miss Blossom had disappeared. He had taken care to have as little to do with her as possible in public lest it be suspected that she was intended as a victim for his foul business in London. Quietly, however, and from a distance, he had watched her closely. And now he could not find her. He made no open enquiries, for he could not have people asking what his interest was in a young girl traveling alone in the steerage. He knew well the extent of the spy system maintained by the associations and committees whose task it was to fight the White Slave Traffic. His own record was not free from the interruptions of similar organizations. The fact remained that the girl had disappeared from the steerage. Certainly she was not in the second class. She must therefore be on the saloon deck. As he had no right of entry to this deck, Darton was compelled to contain his soul in patience and wait for the mystery to explain itself.

His relations with van Houten were no longer as cordial as formerly. He could not forget the Dutchman's word at the close of their business conversation. Then there was the strange letter, which must inevitably be connected in some way with the disappearance of Miss Blossom. Undoubtedly he had cause for anxiety, although he strove to conceal his fear behind self-assurance and insolence. At heart he was a coward, and the letter became little short of an obsession. There must be spies on board this ship. Who had

told the writer of the letter that he had designs on Miss Blossom? What power had suddenly snatched the girl out of his reach? He might have asked Madame Chapuisat, one of the sailors, one of the stewardesses, what had become of Miss Blossom. But his tortuous and secretive nature shrank from such openness. Besides he was something of a fatalist and his fatalism was strongly tinged with superstition. Like many ignorant and uneducated Roman Catholics, he had a few rigid observances. He never drank or did business or thought or spoke filthiness on a Sunday. He never went a journey on a Friday. He refused to sit down to table when the party numbered thirteen. He would rather bite his own finger than kill a spider, and the sight of a black cat made him miserable for hours. All these characteristics inclined him to leave Miss Blossom's fate to declare itself.

On this particular evening he was not feeling well. Although the sea was rough and the great *Gigantic* tossed as though she had been a nutshell, he knew that it was not seasickness that affected him. Solitary he sat in the smoking-room, drinking glass after glass of whiskey. The room was empty, for most of the passengers had gone to bed. He held his glass firmly with both hands when he drank and set it down carefully in the rack with which the table was covered. The *Gigantic* climbed one moment to the summit of a great wave and sank the next as though into the bowels of the sea.

At this moment a stewardess came into the saloon. She was taking the place of the steward usually on duty and, in response to Darton's ring, had come to see what was required. She served the required drink and was turning to go when Darton said:

"Won't you stay and talk to me for a moment or two?"

"I am afraid I have not time, sir."

But, as she spoke, the ship gave a violent lurch and she found herself sitting on the sofa next to Darton.

"There!" said the latter, "that shows you are fated to talk to me for a little."

They fell into conversation about superstitions and ghosts. Darton admitted that he believed in supernatural influences occasionally making themselves felt in daily life.

"I never believed in that sort of thing until just now," said the stewardess.

"What has converted you?"

"The fact that since I have been on board the *Gigantic* I have experienced such an influence."

"What happened?" inquired Darton, nervously.

She replied:

"I read somewhere that there are people able to impose their will from a distance on other people. They call it telepathy. Such a person is on board now."

"On board now?" echoed Darton, at once interested and alarmed.

The storm was beginning to die down. The ship seemed to be getting its breath.

"Many things have happened," replied the stewardess, "of benefit to mankind. Many miracles have been performed by this man on his fellow beings. It seems that he knows everything."

"Tell me more of this man," urged Darton. "Is it that mad fellow dressed like a monk?"

"Yes, sir. That is him. His most remarkable conquest is Lady Mabel Roade. She is entirely under his influence; he works through her without her knowing it, without her even knowing the man himself, for her husband has taken care that they should never meet. And nevertheless . . ."

"What does she do?"

"She distributes money and benefits to the needy through strange indirect channels. She has transferred, suddenly and at great expense, a young girl from the steerage to the saloon deck, saying that the girl was in some danger. . . ."

Darton kept a tight hold on himself and asked quietly:

"And all this you ascribe to the influence of the monk?"

"Certainly I do; and that is not all. Pitt, the cook's boy, was dreadfully ill; Dr. Kallaway had given him up. All of a sudden he was cured, miraculously cured, as though a healing hand had been laid upon him. I was nursing him, and I remember the doctor saying that the recovery was a miracle."

"Anything more?"

"Yes. One of the sailors tells me that he saw yesterday with his own eyes, this stranger spread his hand over one of the little children of Madame Chapuisat and lift it safely from the railing over the coal shaft to the deck again. The whole ship is talking of him. And the anonymous letters that were delivered before the boat sailed. . . . People are now saying that nothing will happen to the ship so long as he is on board. Certainly he cured little Pitt, for the boy now remembers hearing his voice as he lay at the crisis of his illness."

As Darton did not reply the stewardess got up to go. "Good night," she said.

But Darton only grunted.

He sat lost in thought. Neither whiskey nor tobacco had now any taste for him. Profiting by a lull in the already lessening storm he went unsteadily to his cabin. The figure of the Baptist haunted him. He saw him, in imagination, striding as ever up and

down the ship, with his sad smile and his compassionate eyes, the sun lighting up his fair hair like a halo, the Testament in his hand.

Darton put his hand over his eyes as though to drive away the vision. Undressing as though in a panic, he tumbled into his berth and turned out the light.

Outside the storm raged; the *Gigantic* pitched and tossed. Darton found an unwilling comfort in what the stewardess had said. . . . 'So long as this man is on board the ship was safe.' . . . He tried to sleep, but the howling of the wind and the beating of the seas against the sides of the *Gigantic* prevented him. There came into his mind, from some long forgotten day of childhood, a story, and it seemed to him that the roaring of the wind and waves was some unearthly voice relating the tale which had so strangely recurred to him. "Now it came to pass on a certain day that he went into a ship with his disciples; and he said unto them: Let us go over unto the other side of the lake; and they launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep. And there came down a storm of wind on the lake: and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying: Master, master, we perish! Then he arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm. And he said unto them: Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another: What manner of man is this? For he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him."

Darton was now sleeping soundly. The weather was certainly calmer; the great ship became every moment steadier; the noise from without was now a deep and distant murmur. Suddenly Darton sat upright in bed, as though waking from some terrible dream. His

eyes stared into the darkness, but when he spoke it was in a strange, far-away voice, muffled with sleep. He cried:

"Who are you? What do you want? Why are you wrestling with me . . . ? I will not drown, I swear it. . . .!"

But no one answered, no one heard.

But to him, in the grip of the nightmare, his visions were reality. He was wrestling, the sweat pouring down his face, wrestling with all his might. But his opponent's arms were like steel, his strength that of a giant. Slowly Darton felt himself pressed to the ground, and in that moment he recognized his enemy.

"It is a struggle for thy soul," he heard thundered in his ear, "for the soul that thou hast debauched, devil that thou art . . . devil and son of a devil; for it is thy father that has brought all evil into the world, war and falsehood, the slaughter of thousands, greed and ambition, and therefore I am wrestling with thee for thy soul. Understand, spawn of Lucifer, that it is I with whom thou wrestlest. . . ."

"Let me go!" moaned the unhappy man.

"I will never let thee go. My strength is greater than thine, and the word of my mouth is truth, while the word of thy mouth is lies! See how thou art overcome! See how I press my foot on thy neck, how I trample thee under my feet, for I am the ruler of the world. I and my Father that sent me. Yield up thy soul, yield up the souls of the thousands and millions whom thou hast poisoned with thy serpent's tongue. Yield them up, O cursed one, for I, I the son of man, am wrenching them from thee! Down into the dust, eat with the serpent that begot thee! Thou and thy kind are the makers of the war; thy heart and the thoughts of thy heart have brought this misery upon millions in the world, and for the souls

of these millions as for thy soul, I am wrestling with thee! Lie there on the ground! Choke and choke again! For from the beginning of the world art thou the devil!"

Darton felt himself bathed in sweat but still the vision persisted. He saw the Baptist clearly before him and it seemed as though, while he lay on the ground bound with chains, this strange and terrible being brandished over him a flaming sword. At last he seemed to hear himself gasp: "Let me speak!"

The pressure seemed to lessen. With an effort Darton spoke once more.

"I yield her up to you."

"Whom?"

"The girl I sought to destroy."

"And whom else?"

"The thousands, the tens of thousands, the hundreds of thousands, the millions, from every country of the world forced as slaves and sacrifices to the hideous service of Moloch by the spirit of avarice which is the spirit of this war, the spirit to which I bear testimony by the evil of my life."

"Forswear me, Moloch!"

"Thrice be Moloch forsworn!"

"Curse me him thrice."

"Thrice be Moloch cursed!"

"For I wrestle with thee, as once I wrestled with thine ancestor Jacob!"

"My ancestor Jacob," echoed through Darton's lips, the voice of Satan.

"And I have conquered thee?"

"I am conquered."

Silence reigned in the cabin.

As Darton did not appear at breakfast the following morning a steward went to his cabin. After

knocking in vain, the man opened the door and found Darton lying in a pool of blood. He was dead. The port-hole of the cabin was broken. The doctor's theory was that, during the storm, the dead man must have got out of his berth and fallen with both arms against the glass; the arteries were cut clean through by the splinters; as no help had been at hand the victim had bled to death. He had been dead for several hours.

At this moment, reading his Testament, the Baptist passed the cabin door.

"What has happened?" he asked a sailor.

"One of the passengers has fallen against the port-hole in a dream and cut himself so badly that he bled to death."

"Darton, I suppose?" asked the Baptist.

The other nodded.

"I thought so. It must have happened between half past eleven and twelve."

"Maybe, sir. The doctor says he has been dead for several hours."

"Between half past eleven and twelve . . ." murmured the Baptist and went his way without another word.

CHAPTER X

IT is curious how general is the effect of a death on board a steamer. The two thousand passengers of the *Gigantic*, who on land belonged to such totally different classes with such varied interests, were affected alike from highest to lowest, as though they had been the members of a single family. The news of the disaster spread like wildfire and the conjectures as to the manner of the death were endless. Inevitably was everyone haunted by the thought of the watery grave to which the dead man must be committed. Captain Hastings, anxious to upset as little as possible the comfort of the passengers and to carry out the ceremony with the greatest privacy that could be managed, fixed the hour for six o'clock the following morning. Despite his secrecy, however, the rumor of the time appointed trickled through the ship. Darton's body obsessed the minds of all on board to a far greater extent than had ever done the anonymous letters. On the saloon deck it was now the fashion to laugh at these mysterious warnings. Even the handful of serious folk in the second class, who were still inclined to worry at the threat, assured each other that they were already so near the English coast as to make rescue a certainty, even in the case of submarine attack. Whether or no the *Gigantic* carried munitions dropped out as a subject for discussion. Was it not ridiculous to think that the German Government would have so little respect for the various neutral countries represented on board the *Gigantic* as to risk torpedoing a vessel carrying Americans, Swiss, Dutchmen, Danes and Swedes?

But Captain Hastings knew how great an effect on the lives of his passengers the death of Darton would have. No one on board, with the exception of van Houten, seemed to have known the dead man at all intimately. Common sense suggested that the body be rapidly lowered into the sea, early in the morning, without formality or ceremony.

At the same time it jarred on Hastings's principles to perform the burial without at least a touch of solemnity. At last he had an idea. This leader of the Philadelphian Christian Scientists was always on deck early in the morning. He was, in a sense, a minister of religion and, in the absence of any other, would doubtless be the right man to say a few words over the corpse. The captain set out in search of the Baptist and found him, Testament in his hand, standing by the rail and gazing over the waste of the Atlantic.

"Mr. Chatelanard!"

The Baptist turned.

"Good morning, captain," he replied, and the note of astonishment in his voice sounded as though it were assumed. The captain had a feeling that he had been expected, that what he had to ask was already known. He went straight to the point.

"I hope you will pardon my speaking to you, Mr. Chatelanard, but we have no other minister on board and you, I believe, are the leader of the Christian Scientists in Philadelphia. Probably you do not see eye to eye with other ministers . . ."

"Indeed, captain, I do not," interrupted the Baptist. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Nevertheless, I will do what you ask."

The captain forgot to wonder at the reading of his thoughts.

"I am much obliged to you. I suppose you have heard about this affair?"

"You mean Darton's death, captain?"

"Yes. A curious business . . .," replied Captain Hastings tentatively.

"He tried to fight against God and God has smitten him," said the Baptist solemnly.

"I don't know anything about that, Mr. Chatelanard, as I did not know the man myself. But I hope you will not mind if the ceremony is rather early in the morning. Can I count upon you?"

"You can count upon me, captain, but in reality the matter does not lie in my hands, nor yet in yours."

"I do not understand. . . ."

"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid, neither do men light a candle and put it under a vessel but on a candlestick and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."

Hastings was embarrassed and stood silent, not knowing what to say. The Baptist went on:

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

With these words he opened his book and fell to reading. The captain walked away.

The following morning, as the sun threw its rays over the sea, there collected a little group of sailors near the stern of the *Gigantic*. The ship moved very slowly. Standing a little apart, with the corpse of Darton swathed in sacking at their feet, stood the captain, the ship's doctor and van Houten. They were waiting for the Baptist. Despite all requests to the contrary it seemed that every cabin knew that the hour of the burial was at hand. Here and there a

head appeared at the windows giving on to the deck. Striding toward the stern, his hair golden in the morning sunlight, the Baptist attracted curious glances from every side. Pitt peeped from the companion-way above the kitchen. The steerage, unashamedly interested, stretched their necks and stood on tiptoe in order to see.

The Baptist reached the little group:

"Peace be with you!"

And the rough seamen uncovered their heads and stood before him. Walking up to the corpse, the Baptist gave it a rapid glance and then, raising his eyes to heaven, spoke as follows:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in himself; and He hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel

not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

“I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself my witness is not true; there is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

“Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man; but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. And ye have not His word abiding in you; for whom He hath sent, him ye believe not.

“Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

“I receive not honor from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?

“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father;

there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust; for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me; but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

The Baptist stopped speaking. Captain Hastings and the doctor looked at each other in perplexity, for they did not understand the application of the Baptist's words. But van Houten dropped his head and this the Baptist noticed. He went on therefore:

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said unto them: Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you; and they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle; and he saith unto them: Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them: Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto the steward: Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying: These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them,

and said : Friend, I do thee no wrong ; didst not thou agree with me for a penny ? Take that thine is, and go thy way ; I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? Is thine eye evil, because I am good ? So the last shall be first, and the first last ; for many be called, but few chosen."

Van Houten felt that the Baptist had spoken the parable to him and to him only, and, while the hands of the strange being were raised in a final blessing over Darton's body, while the sailors raised the sack and poised it high above the sea, the Jew from the slums in Amsterdam came to a quick decision. He felt a sudden desire for knowledge.

The sun glittered like gold dust on the Atlantic. The Baptist stood, his eyes raised to heaven, his hands crossed on the Book. Slowly the corpse in its sacking winding sheet was lowered into the water. Hardly had it disappeared than people swarmed on to every deck and the engines moved once more at full speed. But there was no trace, on the oily swell of the ocean, of Darton's grave.

Van Houten walked up to the Baptist.

"May I speak to you?" he whispered.

And the Baptist replied :

"Follow me."

CHAPTER XI

AS though led by some invisible hand and compelled by some strange but irresistible will, van Houten followed the Baptist to a deserted corner of the deck. The two men sat down on a couple of folding chairs which happened to be on the spot and for a moment or two gazed silently over the endless expanse of glittering sea. Then the Baptist turned his light brown eyes to the Jew's anxious face, which looked as though the tossing to and fro in his mind of some perplexing problem had prevented sleep throughout the night. At last the Baptist spoke:

"You wish to speak to me, Mr. van Houten?"

"You know me, then?"

"I know you."

Although it would have been easy enough for this man to look him up in the passenger book and so identify him, van Houten had an uneasy feeling that the words 'I know you' had some deeper and more significant meaning. Even as the Jew hesitated, his eyes on the ground, the Baptist said quietly:

"You are worrying over Darton's death, Mr. van Houten."

"Indeed I am!" returned the other. "You can imagine that such a sudden end to a man whom I knew quite intimately, whom I saw constantly every day, must inevitably upset me. The disaster seems so inexplicable."

For a moment it seemed as though the Baptist was not listening. His eyes roved once more over the Atlantic, and he appeared to give heed only to the sigh

of the waves, brushing the steel sides of the ship. Therefore van Houten was surprised when, evidently in response to his last remark, he heard the following strange sentence:

"You and other ordinary men call it a disaster, Mr. van Houten. But it was no disaster, it was a judgment."

Van Houten's instinct was to defend the dead man. He opened his mouth to rebut the implied accusation. But the words died on his lips. He felt himself dominated by the personality of his companion. His answer, when it came, was very different:

"I was deeply moved, sir, by the words you spoke over Darton's body."

"They were not my words, Mr. van Houten."

"Not yours? I have never heard such sayings before."

"You are a Jew?"

"Yes. A Jewish slum child from Amsterdam who has made a bit of money in America."

"I see. And has the money brought you happiness?"

After a short silence van Houten asked:

"Why do you ask me that? To say that money has brought happiness is not quite the way I should put it. But I have worked day and night and the little that I have earned is my reward. There are people on this ship with ten thousand times as much money as I have. Are they happy?"

"According to their lights, yes, Mr. van Houten, but of them is not the Kingdom of Heaven."

"The Kingdom of Heaven?"

"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. That was the opinion of Him whose words I was speaking over Darton's body. If to-day

all these people are lost, of what good is their wealth to them?"

Van Houten started violently :

"All lost?" he cried in alarm.

"All those who lay up for themselves treasure upon earth where moths and rust do corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, for where our treasure is there is our heart also. Where is your heart, Mr. van Houten?"

"I do not know," stammered the Jew.

"You do not know? Why then have you come to me, and what do you want to ask?"

"I came because I was worried and anxious."

"You came, rather, from fear, Mr. van Houten. From fear of death."

"You seem to guess my thoughts, sir. It is true that I came out of fear of death. Do you believe the *Gigantic* will be sunk?"

The Baptist looked pityingly at van Houten.

"It is not given to me to read the future. But the sinking of the *Gigantic* has nothing to do with my belief."

"But are we not both on board the ship, you and I?"

"Certainly we are, but he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. To those who love God all things are for the best which are ordained to happen. Among such things is the sinking of the *Gigantic*."

"The sinking of the *Gigantic*?"

"Certainly. For is not God able from these stones to raise up children unto Abraham?"

"I cannot follow you, sir. How can the sinking of the *Gigantic* be for the best?"

"You omit part of what I said, Mr. van Houten. I

said such things were for the best *to those who love God.*"

"And who are they?"

"Ask yourself that question. Whom do you love? Where is your treasure? For where your treasure is there is your heart also. What is it you desire with every fibre of your being?"

"I do not know."

"But I know. With every fibre of your being you desire to get safely off this ship to England and from England to Holland, because you want to increase your possessions tenfold. And that is why I asked you whether you loved God."

Van Houten had no reply to this plain speaking. His silence amounted to a confession. For the Baptist was right; he had expressed to the last detail the sole desire which possessed the Jew.

As van Houten remained silent, the Baptist continued:

"My Father in heaven knows that which you need before you ask and therefore whether the *Gigantic* is sunk or not makes no difference, because my Heavenly Father knows of what I have need."

"You are wonderful!"

"But that is not why I am speaking to you, Mr. van Houten," said the Baptist earnestly. "There are few on board to whom I would talk in this way. The whole world is at stake, but I am not of the world. In these days that which was spoken is being fulfilled."

"And that was?"

"They will put you out of the synagogues and whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. Such a time, Mr. van Houten, is ours."

"Tell me more of our time."

"There is also written: Verily, verily, I say unto you that ye shall weep and lament but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful but your sorrow

shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. Such a woman, Mr. van Houten, is our time. The world is in travail and no one knows what future is in store for mankind. But I know it because I have faith, as you also should have faith, the faith that removes mountains."

"Give me such faith!"

"That I cannot do. It can only come by personal experience. Perhaps the sinking of the *Gigantic* will teach you faith, as my illness in St. Louis taught it to me. At that time I was born again. Do you feel that you can be born again?"

"How can I be born again?"

"He said that it must be. Whether we have the strength or not is the essential element of our fate to-day. There was once a Pharisee called Nicodemus, a ruler among the Jews, who came to Jesus, just as you have come to me and found him in the night and said to Him: Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him. And Jesus answered and said: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

Van Houten was staring in silent amazement at the Baptist, who, with a look full of pity, continued the narrative:

"Nicodemus saith unto Him: How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God."

"Of water and of the spirit?" repeated van Houten.

"So it is written. And further: That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. And so, Mr. van Houten, is our time."

Van Houten had now understood. As in a dream he repeated the majestic words: "Thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth."

"One thing, however, we do know, Mr. van Houten, that our time has come to fulfillment. Nicodemus did not know this for he asked: How can these things be?"

"And what did the other answer?" enquired van Houten.

"He answered, as to-day the leaders of the peoples should answer: Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth in him is not condemned; but he that be-

lieveth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

"That is indeed true to-day," said van Houten, "that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil."

"And the story goes on, Mr. van Houten, that Jesus said: Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved; but he that doeth truth, cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

The soul of the Jew was in a turmoil. The words of the gospel, never before heard by him, were implanted in his soul like seeds of the future. At last he asked:

"What shall I do to achieve faith and to be like you?"

As once before the Baptist seemed to have forgotten his disciple. His spirit seemed to be wandering over the lands and seas of the world, over the lands which were seeing the slaughter of so many thousands, over the seas in which so many vessels had been engulfed. He did not reply to van Houten's question. The Jew repeated therefore:

"What shall I do to achieve faith and to be like you?"

The Baptist smiled and in reply spoke as follows:

"There met Him by chance a certain man who ran and kneeled before him and asked: Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him: Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal,

Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother. And he said: All these have I kept from my youth up.

"Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him: Yet lackest thou one thing; sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. And when he heard this he was very sorrowful; for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said: How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said: Who then can be saved? And he said: The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

"Then Peter said: Lo, we have left all and followed thee. And he said unto them: Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and, in the world to come, life everlasting."

As he was speaking the Baptist kept his eyes steadily seawards, and now, when he turned round to look at van Houten, he found the man had gone. Had not a young man gone away sorrowful, on a previous occasion, because he was very rich? The Baptist made no attempt to follow the Jew but returned to his reading. The sun mounted higher in the sky; the daily life of the ship went its accustomed course. Darton and the funeral were forgotten; cheerful voices floated through the windows of the saloons; the machines throbbed tirelessly. Perhaps in thirty-six hours or less land would be sighted and, in thought, everyone except the Baptist was already on shore. He, however, stood

in spirit on the hill of Galilee, the blue sea at his feet, the olive trees to left and right and crouched before him a multitude of folk. And he taught them and spoke to them as follows: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The playing of the ship's orchestra drifted to his ears. He rose, gathered his robe about him, and passed with long steps over the deck.

CHAPTER XII

IN each of the three classes of the *Gigantic* was a notice board on which announcements were posted to attract the attention of the passengers. On these notice boards there now appeared the following statement :

As a result of circumstances that could not have been foreseen, I am compelled to alter the course of the ship. The vessel will not proceed, as intended, to Southampton, but will put in as near as possible to Brest. The company will be responsible for all expenses incurred by passengers in getting from that place to England or to the port of France to which they would naturally have proceeded from Southampton.

C. M. F. HASTINGS (Captain).

Purposely no explanation had been given of this sensational announcement. The truth was that a wireless message had been received to the effect that the channel was too dangerous for the great *Gigantic* on account of mines. The ship was moving slowly. This fact, together with the notice on the board, sent a thrill of anxiety through the passengers, despite the strict instructions given by the captain to those few who knew, that no explanation must be made public. In the steerage particularly, where a large number of young men were desirous of getting to England as soon as possible, this sudden change of plan together with the inevitable delay that it caused, created irritation and uneasiness. The second-class passengers would have taken the matter more calmly but for the extraordinary behavior of van Houten, who wandered about the ship like some evil spirit seeking rest. He asked everyone he met whether the *Gigantic* was carry-

ing munitions. He discussed the probability of the Germans sinking a liner and lost his balance entirely after he had read the captain's notice.

"We shall never get on shore, we shall never get on shore! The notice is an omen!"

Remonstrances and arguments left him unmoved. He could be seen, when he thought himself unobserved, taking out his pocketbook and stroking it as though to make sure that he still had safe all the money which he had brought for his purposes in England. He treated this pocketbook as a mother treats her child. Certainly the contents were of great importance to him, for he had brought practically his whole capital in order to invest it in the great business scheme he had evolved. Thousand dollar notes to the number of a hundred and twenty-three bulged the sides of this precious pocketbook. He began to behave like a sleep-walker. Obsessed by the idea that someone was trying to steal his money, he gave himself up entirely to guarding his treasure. He neither ate, drank nor slept. The whole night long he lay with open eyes, his hand on his pocketbook, which he placed under the pillow. During the daytime that same hand never left the breast pocket of his coat so that he looked as though he was forever making a solemn vow, his hand upon his heart.

On the saloon deck there was no such exaggerated folly. Despite the fact that people knew well they were now in the zone of mines and submarines, they still laughed and joked. According to the custom of their class they gave their whole attention to keeping up appearances. Lord Arthur Roade, desperately anxious for his wife and child, said not a word. A young millionaire who was crossing with his bride for a honeymoon in England, permitted no sign of worry to disturb the half-humorous love making in which they

had passed the voyage hitherto. Mabel Roade knelt in her cabin, praying for her child; at times she sat writing in the book a record of the baby's development, noting down every detail of his smile and movement, every indication of the awakening of that still slumbering spirit. Of Miss Blossom nothing was seen or heard. She had removed to the saloon deck but hardly ever left her cabin. Her fellow travelers did not worry themselves much about her, some assuming that she had not the right clothes to mingle with the upper ten, others that she was traveling in order to escape some persecutor and therefore kept herself out of sight.

The captain, naturally enough, found his cabin haunted by enquirers. Everyone wanted to ask him why the course of the ship had been altered. Everyone took the opportunity of explaining that he was not afraid for himself but for his wife, or for his children or for the other passengers. Everyone professed complete confidence in the efficiency and courage of the crew. Everyone affected to treat the possibility of mine and submarine as the merest chimera.

The captain treated each visitor with courtesy and equanimity. He assured them that there was no question of danger, that there would be no difficulty in disembarking at Brest, and that while with the company, he regretted the delay and inconvenience the arrangement would cause to the travelers for England, he felt sure they would recognize that the change was made out of necessity.

The Baptist alone paid no visit to the captain. Hastings was not sorry, for, since the strange speech made over Darton's body, this uncanny individual had become oppressive rather than merely a subject for polite amusement. He realized that this burial at sea had created a sensation throughout the whole ship. But then how could the captain have known what this

Christian Scientist would have said at the ceremony, how could he have foretold that all the passengers on the *Gigantic* would, so to speak, sit at the Baptist's feet? Hastings himself was too much a man of action. Too much of a rationalist, too downright a sailor, to allow his mind to be affected by what had happened. At the same time he was the kind of man to seek out a disagreeable encounter rather than to avoid it, in order to assure himself that there was no cause for worry. Therefore he made a point of speaking to the Baptist at the first opportunity. It happened that, as Hastings sat at his desk with the door of his cabin ajar, studying the Admiralty map containing indications of the whereabouts of mines, the Baptist passed in the corridor without.

"Mr. Chatelanard!" called Hastings.

The Baptist entered the cabin.

"How is it that you are the only passenger who has not been to ask me about the change in the ship's course?"

"Because, captain, whatever happens I shall reach my destination."

"Why, certainly," laughed the captain. "And as I believe you are going to France you will probably get there a little earlier than you would have done ordinarily!"

"I value your assurance, captain. But I am doubtful whether there will really be much difference in the time within which I shall reach my appointed place."

Hastings felt his uneasiness returning. There was something about this individual which made him uncomfortable, against which his nature sought to struggle. He was not sorry to see the Baptist turn to go. Another diversion was provided at this moment by the entrance of a group of young girls who were traveling first class under the captain's care and

who, in consequence, had been nicknamed "Hastings's daughters." Ranging between fourteen and sixteen years of age they were on their way from Vancouver to finishing schools in England, and their parents, people of means in Canada, had entrusted them to the care of the captain. Violet Campbell, the eldest, spoke for the party:

"We've found you out, papa Hastings!" she said.

"Even if you have," replied the captain with a smile, "there is no need to push my map off the table. And what is this great discovery you have made?"

"Poring over your old map, looking for mines that are not there!" cried one of the girls, with all the carelessness of youth.

"You leave the mines to me. They're my business. What is it you have found out?"

"That it is your majesty's birthday to-day, papa Hastings," replied Violet Campbell. "Forty-seven years old to-day, old grandfather, and you tried to hide it from us!"

"And who is the detective?"

"It's not very mysterious really," said the girl. "We came on an old year book of the Steamship Company in the library and it had your portrait in it and the date of your birth. So we worked it out. Will you promise us now?"

"Promise you what?"

"How stupid you are, papa Hastings! A birthday party of course; just a little party as the voyage is so nearly over . . ."

The captain shrugged his shoulders good-humoredly. "As you like, my dears," he said, "and you must each of you give me a dance afterwards."

Full of delight, laughing and chattering, the children ran away to make preparations for the festivity. They got over the absence of flowers by coaxing several

sheets of colored paper out of the head steward and garlanding with these, torn into strips and folded into rosettes, the captain's chair and the head of the table at which he sat. When their work was finished the saloon looked festive indeed.

Dinner-time arrived and the guests, in evening clothes, flocked into the saloon. It seemed that the jewels shone more brightly that night than usual, that the band played more brilliantly. As the captain entered the room a young man called for cheers and the whole company joined in the shout. Even the menu was more superfine than usual, though on board the *Gigantic* the food was always of the richest. The excitement of the occasion drove all thoughts of mines and submarines out of the heads of the assembly. After the dinner had progressed for some while, Lord Arthur Roade, filling his glass with champagne, rose to toast Captain Hastings, the *Gigantic* and the Steamship Company.

Even as he began to speak, the Baptist entered the saloon and, without looking at anyone, walked to his place and sat down. A plate of fruit was standing before him and he ate an apple, an orange and some nuts, appearing not to listen to the congratulatory words of the orator. Lord Arthur sat down, the toast having been drunk with acclamation. Laughter and conversation broke out from all sides; the band struck up the famous quartette from the *Mikado*:

The flowers that bloom in the spring, tra-la,
Have nothing to do with the case!

At this moment there came a violent jar. Glasses, bottles, plates, knives and forks seemed to spring from the tables. The great ship trembled like an animal mortally wounded. The engines came to a sudden halt. Everyone went very pale, but not a word was

spoken. There was only one thought in every head, "We have struck a mine!"

The ship lay motionless and everyone waited, waited for the inevitable explosion which should break the *Gigantic* into two pieces. All eyes were turned to the captain, as though he alone could save them. Suddenly the Baptist rose:

"Do not fear," he said. "It is nothing; only an accident in the engine-room. The ship will not sink."

Everyone turned to look at the speaker, some in amazement, some with dawning hope, some in blind faith. And the Baptist repeated:

"Be calm! It is nothing. My ship cannot be sunk."

Moments passed. Nothing happened. The *Gigantic* lay motionless.

During the few moments of the Baptist's interruption, the captain had been listening anxiously at the telephone which stood behind his chair. He now turned and addressed the room:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to be able to tell you that the mishap is not so very serious. The main shaft of one of the engines has broken in half. It appears that the chief mate, who was on the lookout, discerned, as though by a miracle, a floating mine about three hundred yards from the vessel. He instantly passed the word to stop the engines and the sudden jar caused the mishap. I hope we shall be able to repair the damage in a few hours. If not, we shall have to progress as best we can with one engine. If you will now excuse me, I will go and see that everything possible is done."

He left the room. The band struck up once more, but the music had lost the sparkle of the earlier part of the evening. As the stewards handed round dessert, the Baptist vanished silently from the saloon.

CHAPTER XIII

THE captain hurried to the engine-room and after investigation of the damage found that by good fortune there was a reserve shaft on board. This shaft could be fixed after a few hours' work and thus render the engine once more serviceable. Hastings faced, as best he might, the anxiety of having to lie motionless for several hours amid the threat of mines and submarines.

In the meantime the confusion and excitement which the accident had caused throughout the ship began to die down. The steerage particularly had at first been in a state almost of panic. When, however, it was clear that although the *Gigantic* was standing still, she was not going to blow up or sink, a certain amount of self-control re-established itself.

When the Baptist left the dining saloon and was walking absorbed in thought through the corridor, now full of hurrying and anxious figures, he found himself suddenly face to face with Miss Blossom. The girl had rushed from her cabin and now, seeing the Baptist before her, shrank back as pale and speechless as if she had seen a ghost.

"Mr. Chatelanard!" she gasped.

"Do not be afraid of me now, Miss Blossom. I knew that I should find you again."

She trembled.

"There is nothing to be frightened of," he assured her, "we shall not sink, for, as it is written, until the end of the world I am with you."

He took the girl's hand but she snatched it away from him.

"Do not touch me, please!" she said with a shudder. "Even in that garb I know you. Immediately I moved on to the saloon deck I recognized you and I was afraid. For I have not forgotten what happened in your mother's house in St. Louis."

The Baptist's eyes were full of pain.

"Indeed you are mistaken, Miss Blossom," he said earnestly. "I am no longer the man I once was; such a man shall I never be again. For I have been born anew."

She shook her head.

"I do not believe you," she said.

"And everyone that receiveth me . . ." he broke off. "I should like to talk to you a little."

Without a word she followed him into that saloon in which he had previously conversed with Lord Arthur Roade. She sat down but he paced the room and, as she watched him, she felt something of the uncanny influence which his personality exerted over others. As he made no effort to speak, she broke the silence:

"So it was you who had me transferred from the steerage to first class! All that talk about a charitable lady! It was not worthy of you, Mr. Chatelanard!"

"I have no idea who it was who brought you from the steerage to the first class. I know nothing of any story of a benevolent lady. I did not even know till five minutes ago that you were on board. I only knew that some time in my life I should meet you again, so that I might try to make up to you the wrong I once tried to do."

"You have assurance, to talk like that, after what happened in St. Louis! I suppose that is why you have put an end to my chances of getting that good position in England, that is why the man died whom I trusted, and who was helping me to the employment!"

"What man?"

"You know perfectly well—Darton."

"Darton! He had promised you a position in England. . . . He was bringing you over. . . . You? And I wrestled with him and conquered him."

"What do you mean?"

But the Baptist did not reply. With bowed head he stood thinking deeply, and it was as though a great struggle raged in his breast. At last he spoke:

"The night that Darton died, Miss Blossom, I could not sleep. I could not even close my eyes. Outside raged the storm and I was sitting—it was half an hour before midnight—reading in my book. I opened it at hazard and read as follows: 'And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him, a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season.' That is why Darton died."

Miss Blossom gazed at the speaker in horrified amazement. Was he mad? Had something terrible happened and turned his mind? She had heard gossip that there was a man among the passengers who was thought to be a lunatic; was this he? She answered therefore in that vaguely benevolent tone often employed with the idea of soothing the sick:

"Very likely, Mr. Chatelanard, but I am afraid I do not quite follow you. What you read in your book is above my head. I do not understand it."

"You do not understand it, Miss Blossom, but nevertheless the hour of judgment is at hand."

"You mean the war?"

"I do. The world's hour of judgment. Verily I

say unto you, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

She smiled, half in pity, half in contempt. He noticed this and his next remark was full of emotion.

"Either you cannot understand me, Miss Blossom, or you do not want to. And yet, observe this ship. I say unto you not one plank shall remain upon another, not one steel plate rivetted to another."

"What are you saying? You are foretelling the destruction of the *Gigantic*!"

"I do not prophesy, Miss Blossom, I only say those words which are put into my mouth for such a time as this."

"What words?"

And once again she felt the subtle force of his personality which, however desperately she struggled to throw it off, threatened to overcome her.

Realizing this, he made one more attempt to win her, and spoke as follows:

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the

kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand :) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

"And woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck, in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the word to this time; no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo! Here is Christ, or There! believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the Sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of

heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree. When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.

"Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all

his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servant, and eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

As he finished speaking, the Baptist raised his eyes. He was alone. Silently and like van Houten, Miss Blossom had crept away. She had not understood him, because she had not trusted him. He looked for her no more. He rose and walked down from the first-class to the steerage deck. Here he found crowds standing about, men, women and children, old and young. The alarm caused by the evening's accident was partially but not wholly allayed, and no one had sought his berth. With a vague idea of being ready to get places in the boats, they camped about all over the deck, mothers with children in their arms, families surrounded by their few precious belongings.

Among the crowd was Madame Chapuisat with her children about her skirts. Little Gaston, catching sight of the Baptist, tugged at his mother's arm.

"Look, mamma! That is the man who lifted Louison off the railing of the coal shaft!"

The poor woman, hearing this, fell on her knees before the Baptist and kissed the hem of his robe. He raised her up and then, taking Louison on his knees, sat down by the mother's side.

Hardly had he done so when a commotion was visible among the crowd collected near the entrance to the steerage cabin. Excited talking and shouts indicated that some new notice had been placed on the notice board. A young man hurrying by threw over his shoulder a laconic statement to the effect that the

Gigantic would not sail to Brest after all, but to Liverpool. Madame Chapuisat leaped to her feet and, leaving the Baptist with the child on his knee, hurried to see for herself what had occurred. She returned in a moment, her eyes full of tears, restraining her sobs with difficulty. In reply to the Baptist's questioning look, she explained somewhat incoherently the purpose of her journey to France, how joyful she had been when first the change was made from Southampton to Brest and how now, without a word of explanation, the *Gigantic* would turn backwards and, after calling at Queenstown, go to Liverpool.

"What shall I do?" she wailed. "It will take me days to get to France from Liverpool! And all the while my husband may be dying!"

"We will go to France together," said the Baptist soothingly, "and there shall be no delay. I will help you find your husband, Madame Chapuisat."

And she believed him.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked her as she sat in silence.

"Of a Bible story, sir."

"And which one?"

"The story of the woman," replied Madame Chapuisat, "who cried after Jesus: Have pity on me, thou son of David!"

"And what did he reply?"

"He answered no word."

"And then what happened?"

"His disciples came up and urged him to send her away because she cried after them."

"And what did he do, Madame Chapuisat?"

"He turned away from the poor woman, sir, saying: I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. For she was a Canaanite."

"What did the woman reply?"

"She fell on her knees before him, sir, and said: Lord, help me! But he answered and said: It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. And she said: Truth, Lord. Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her: O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

"Yes," replied the Baptist, "indeed your faith is great, Madame Chapuisat, and it shall be to you as you desire. Together we will go to France and find your husband. There was one other thing that Jesus said. . . ."

"What was that, sir?"

"Verily, verily, I say unto you such faith have I not found, no, not in Israel."

During their conversation, quite a crowd of steerage passengers had gathered round the Baptist, as he sat by the French woman's side. Some were sitting at his feet, others collected in a circle round about him. He read in their eyes at once fear of death and a thirst for his teaching; wherefore he looked round at them and spoke as follows:

"A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold.

"Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables; that 'seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.' Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out

of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

And suddenly the sun rose out of the sea, lighting the Baptist's hair to gold. The multitude gazed at it in amazement as though they could not tell when or whither the night had fled.

CHAPTER XIV

AT the same time as he received the second wireless message advising him that the danger of mines in the channel was so great as to render it imperative for the *Gigantic* to change her course once again and sail to Liverpool, Captain Hastings was given to understand that, before he turned the liner northwards, a tug would put out from Brest in order to take on shore the French mails. Standing on the bridge he now saw a black speck in the distance, which, as it approached, showed itself to be the tug in question. Before very long the little steamer, which looked like a cockle-shell beside the vast bulk of the *Gigantic*, was lying alongside and preparations were made to help on board the officer, the post-office official and one or two French sailors. Hastings received the first two in his cabin and consulted with them privately about conditions in the channel.

"A smaller boat than yours might risk it," said the French officer, "but it would be madness to take the *Gigantic* even nearer than this to the French coast. How comes it that you have been standing still so long?"

While the mail bags were being prepared for removal to France, the captain explained the mishap to the engines, and paid a tribute to Jan van der Linden's extraordinary quickness in detecting the mine.

"What's the general opinion in Brest now about the submarine?" he asked.

The Frenchman shrugged: "We don't worry very

much about them," he replied—"not at least as a danger to liners. They are complicating troop-transport and merchant shipping, but great steamers carrying neutral passengers . . . !"

It was announced that the French mails were already on board the tug. The visitors prepared to leave. As the captain was passing with them out of his cabin he encountered the Baptist and, behind him, Madame Chapuisat and her children.

"I have a favor to ask you, captain."

Hastings saluted, half-humorously.

"Would it be possible for me with this woman and her children to go to France on board the tug?"

The captain's instinct was to rule this proposal out as contrary to all precedent and therefore as impossible. The next moment, however, he remembered the Baptist's strange certainty that he would reach France without delay, and there came over him, more strongly than ever, the feeling of antagonism toward this curious passenger. He was as loyal a servant to the traditions of his calling as any other, but, after all, it was war-time and a practical man turns chance to the best account possible. He considered a moment and then replied:

"I should have no objection, Mr. Chatelanard, but it really depends on the French officer in charge of the tug . . ."

And with his eyes he, so to speak, introduced the Baptist to the Frenchman, who was standing impatiently by.

"May I ask of you this great favor?" said the Baptist to the French officer. "I will pay your men handsomely if you will take the handful of us as passengers; it is essential to this poor woman's happiness that she should so soon as possible start searching for her husband who is reported missing at the front."

Certainly not the promise of money, probably not even the piteous look thrown to him by Madame Chapuisat, but rather the compelling beauty of the Baptist's voice and look, induced the Frenchman to give a curt but polite assent.

"We cannot wait, you understand," he said, "but if you are ready to come immediately I am willing to make the exception and take you."

A few moments only were necessary for the chief steward to put in order the landing papers of the passengers who were so unconventionally going ashore before the *Gigantic's* voyage was really over. As Madame Chapuisat and the children were preparing to descend into the tug the Baptist held out his hand to the captain.

"Good-bye, sir," he said, "and thank you!"

Then, picking up the little Louison, he descended the almost perpendicular ladder down the cliff-like side of the *Gigantic* with as little awkwardness or apparent precaution as though he were walking along a high road. No time was lost, once they were on board, and in a minute or two the tug moved slowly away from the liner's side. The Baptist stood there, the little child on his arm, the sun once more lighting his hair into the semblance of a halo.

Lord Arthur Roade came hurrying to the captain's side.

"I cannot find my wife, captain. Have you seen her anywhere?"

Hastings had hardly time to shake his head before the voice of Lady Mabel struck on the ears of the two men. She seemed to be calling from some other world.

"Let me go, nurse! Let me go!"

Lord Arthur and the captain turned to see the young woman, with pale and agonized features, hurrying to

the side of the ship. She paid no attention to her husband as he stepped forward with an anxious question on his lips. She shaded her eyes with her hand and gazed out over the Atlantic.

"He is leaving us, he is leaving us!" she moaned.

"Who?"

"The Master!"

Neither Lord Arthur nor the captain could find words to reply. They now saw to their amazement that not only Lady Mabel but crowds from the steerage and the second class, men, women and children, sailors and stokers, van Houten, Pitt, Miss Blossom, the doctor, the cook, stewards and stewardesses, were all gazing as though entranced at the now vanishing tug skimming over the shining surface of the sea. In a moment or two the figure of the Baptist, standing with the child in his arms, faded into the mist of distance and, as he vanished, Lady Mabel cried as though in prayer:

"Lord, forsake us not; for the night draweth on . . . !"

Lord Arthur supported his wife back to her cabin once more. Then he rejoined the captain.

"What kind of a fellow was that Chatelanard?" he asked.

"No kind I ever met before," replied the captain, "and to be quite frank with you, I am not at all sorry to have found this way of getting rid of him. He was setting the whole ship by the ears and there's no room for that kind of person in these stirring times."

"No—you are right," returned Lord Arthur, "in times like these there is no room for such a man."

The captain continued:

"I was a fool to ask him to officiate at Darton's funeral. The whole thing started from that. If I'd had any idea of how he would behave, I should never

have dreamed of suggesting anything of the kind. At least before that he left people alone and they left him alone! Thank God we're rid of him!"

"*You* are rid of him, captain, but *I* . . ."

"Why not you as well?"

"All my peace of mind has vanished, captain. It so happened that early on the voyage I made this man's acquaintance and he made a very strange impression on me. So strange that I spared no effort to prevent his meeting my wife. I thought I had succeeded, but now, judging by what has just happened, all my trouble has been in vain."

"Surely you are unduly pessimistic, Lord Arthur? I understand from the doctor that Lady Roade is slightly overwrought, a little nervous, nothing unusual. . . . Once safely on shore, everything will be forgotten in a day or two!"

"Ah, yes! . . . Once safely on shore . . ."

The captain murmured some words of reassurance. Of course the voyage to Liverpool would take a little longer but really there was now no danger whatever. . . . Even to himself his words were not very convincing.

The other was hardly listening. When the captain stopped speaking he broke out:

"I can't get out of my head that extraordinary business about the mine seen at three hundred yards. It was a miracle! And then all the time I was speaking at your birthday dinner, I felt that man's eyes resting on me, full of a most disturbing pity. For it was a miracle, don't you think so?"

"I don't believe in miracles myself," replied the captain, "I prefer to regard the matter as a piece of extraordinary good luck and as proof of van der Linden's sharp eyes and seamanship."

"I have every respect for the chief mate's skill,

captain," replied Lord Arthur, "but I am not convinced that in darkness and mist any human being could have detected that mine, if it had not been revealed to him from above. . . . Of course, you think me crazy," he went on, seeing the captain's look of pained astonishment; "laugh at me as much as you like; I only hope you are right. But, as I say, I am not convinced. Even less so since I read this paper which I found in my wife's cabin, just before I first asked you where she was. The paper was crumpled up and thrown on the floor. I do not pretend to know what it is supposed to be, and as you see, the writing is so smudged as to make it nearly illegible.

Hastings took the paper and deciphered with some difficulty the following lines, written in ink, but badly blurred and spotted:

And I seem to hear a great voice calling,
As I kneel upon the icy temple stairs:
Hail to him, the Comforter!
Think upon these words in your distresses!
Hear them sound above the battle clamor!
Hail to him, the Comforter!

Lord Arthur repeated the last words in a low voice. Then he and the captain looked at each other a moment, shook hands in silence and parted.

CHAPTER XV

IT was shortly after lunch. Since midnight the *Gigantic* had once more been on the move. She had left the southwest corner of England well to eastward and was now traveling northwards at full speed. A general feeling pervaded the ship that land was not far away. In the dining saloon of the first class the passengers still lingered over their coffee and liqueurs. There were some who became half-humorously sentimental over the possibility of this being the last meal which their company would take together. There was little doubt that by evening the boat would make Queenstown and a large number of the travelers, glad to take to the shore as soon as possible, would leave the *Gigantic* and travel to London by rail via Dublin and Holyhead, substituting the brief Irish Channel crossing for the voyage to Liverpool on board the liner. Lord Arthur Roade was talking to the young millionaire and his bride. Lighting a large cigar and raising his cognac, the millionaire remarked:

"Well, here's to your health, Roade, and to yours also, my dear Eveline! By to-night we shall be safe on shore and by to-morrow all our troubles will be forgotten!"

Lord Arthur responded, somewhat absent-mindedly, to the toast. Courtesy demanded that he should wish the young couple well but his own mind was far from easy. He could not get out of his head the picture of the Baptist, fading into the distance on his way to Brest; in his ears still rang his wife's despairing cry.

At this moment there were heard from the drawing-room the notes of the piano. As Lord Arthur and the two Americans passed from the dining saloon and went by the door of the drawing-room, they saw young Violet Campbell seated at the Steinway grand and singing softly as she played:

"My heart's in the Highlands,
My heart is not here!"

The other young girls, clustering round her, began to cry out:

"Oh, do play something cheerful, Vi! We shall all be in tears in a minute! Play some ragtime!"

And the next moment the syncopations of a fox-trot tinkled across the air.

The captain was on the bridge, as he had been ever since the *Gigantic*, her broken shaft repaired, had started once more upon her way. With him was van der Linden.

"You're sure of her course?" asked the captain.

"Absolutely, sir. She's making a straight line for Kinsale."

All the time he spoke the mate kept the glasses to his eyes. Before the *Gigantic* stretched a calm and sun-flecked sea; overhead the sky was broken blue. Suddenly van der Linden spoke, half to himself:

"That's funny. . . . What is that? . . . Do you see, sir?"

"See what? Where?"

"Straight ahead, sir, seemingly right on the horizon. . . . Do you see that patch of sun-glare? . . . I thought I saw a dark streak. . . . Something like a fish. . . ."

"No, I can see nothing."

The old man continued to peer through his glasses.

"It looks as though it was a reef, or something; one

can see the sunlight on the foam. There it is again! Quite clearly! A dark patch like a whale!"

The captain laughed.

"Rubbish! A whale just off the south coast of Ireland! But I still can't see anything. Where is the telescope?"

For quite half a minute van der Linden watched the captain as he gazed through the telescope into the distance. Hastings removed the glass and turned to the mate. His jaw was set, but he was very pale.

"Perfectly true!" he said quietly. "Have a look yourself, van der Linden. The telescope is much clearer than the glass. It's a periscope—and nothing less."

The captain almost threw the telescope to the old man and then, rushing to the speaking tube, gave a quick order to the engine-room:

"Sharp to the left, reverse engines and full speed ahead!"

Almost instantly the ship checked slightly and the leftward turn was begun. The next second it seemed as though some supernatural power stopped the great vessel in her advance and without a pause hurled her in the other direction. From every corner of the ship, excitement and cries. Crowds rushed from the cabins and thronged to the rails.

"All to the centre! Keep the rails clear!" But van der Linden's voice was lost in the tumult.

On the promenade deck Lord Arthur held his wife in his arms. Mabel Roade had snatched the child from the nurse and pressed him to her breast. The young millionaire did his best to soothe his bride.

And now, in every saloon and cabin of the boat, the electric alarm bells rang. Danger. . . . The boats clear. . . . All life-belts on. . . . !

But it was too late. The *Gigantic* seemed to give

a cry of pain like a wounded animal; she shuddered, as though mortally stricken. The torpedo had struck full in the engine-room; and through the open wound the sea rushed in. The engines stopped instantly. The huge ship began to list badly. But she did not sink. So far the bulkheads held.

The crew had rushed to the boats. In a moment these were slung outwards and the pulley ropes lay at the passengers' feet. From the bridge Hastings's voice thundered, dominating the confusion:

"Women and children first! I shall shoot any who press forward out of their turn. Every sailor is authorized to use his weapon. First boat clear! Fifty-two only! Is she ready? Down with her!"

The boat had filled like lightning. The young girls from Vancouver, Miss Blossom, the millionaire's bride, nurse Garrison—crowded in with more than three dozen others, all women and children. The sailors in charge clambered in last. The boat swung clear of the *Gigantic's* side like some extraordinary balloon, poised for a moment between sea and sky. At the last moment Mabel Roade had been hurriedly lifted in, hugging the child to her breast. At this moment the sinking *Gigantic* gave a terrible convulsive start like a beast in mortal agony. There was a cry of horror. The ropes that held the boat snapped like cotton. The boat itself was dashed to atoms against the side of the *Gigantic* and her unhappy cargo plunged into the sea. Lord Arthur leaped like a madman after his wife and was seen for a moment swirling in the vortex of the doomed ship before he vanished under the waves. The young millionaire, his teeth grimly set, prepared to die as became a gentleman. He resolutely pushed from his mind his young wife's fate, resolutely forbade himself to think of the future that might have been theirs.

"Second boat clear!"

They were horrible minutes, but this time the *Gigantic* made no movement. Like a gull the boat sank quickly to the surface of the water. Eighty-two people had been crowded into her, but as soon as she touched the sea the oars sprang into motion and she shot safely beyond the fatal whirlpool of the sinking ship. The sailors cheered.

"Third boat clear!"

In the meantime, from the second class and from the steerage, boats had been lowered. There were now three safely clear in the open sea.

In the second class, Black, one of the mates, was in charge of the rescue organization, and, like Captain Hastings, held his revolver in his hand. Women on their knees cried aloud:

"Lord save us!"

At Black's order they were seized and almost thrown into the boats, which was now ready for launching. But van Houten stood in the way. Forcing himself forward, he knelt before Black crying:

"Let me go in the boat! For God's sake, let me go!"

But the revolver pointed at his head was the only answer. Another boat loaded and ready to go and still van Houten was left behind. Feverishly he offered all and sundry money—a thousand, two thousand, three thousand dollars . . . ! His voice grew shrill and tremulous. But no one listened. Four, five, six, ten thousand dollars! . . . The second boat sank to the surface of the sea. One of the ropes that held it brushed against van Houten's hand in which, during his panic-stricken cries and prayers, he had held his precious pocketbook. The Jew suddenly shrieked, for the rope had jerked the pocketbook from his hand and whirled it over the side of the ship, lost forever in the Atlantic. Van Houten took leave of his senses. He

began to laugh hysterically like a schoolboy at a circus; then he cried aloud: "Kill me! Kill me!" but no one listened to him. His words and movements were lost in a smothered roar from deep in the body of the *Gigantic*. The negro stokers were buried alive. The water had rushed in above them, was already mounting rapidly in the stokeholes themselves. The electric light had gone out and there, as it were walled up in darkness with no prospect but that of immediate death by drowning, they reverted to the blood lust and savagery of their race. One of them, a giant Nubian, drew his knife and ran amuck among his companions, striking whatever he ran against in the darkness. All the time he roared like one possessed of the devil and it was his lunatic bellowing that was heard, as though far away, on the decks of the steerage and of the second class.

With each minute that passed, terror increased. Boat after boat got safely off; yet the crowd of those on deck seemed as great as ever. The *Gigantic's* wireless was still working and appeal after frenzied appeal was sent out. But no passing ship, no friendly wireless station, picked up the messages.

Still she did not sink and every second meant life.

Suddenly from the steerage deck came the sound of revolver shots. The last boat was ready for launching, crowded to its utmost capacity with eighty souls. But there were two hundred who wanted to go. Suddenly, one of the young men on the way to a munition factory in England fired a random shot, and for a moment all discipline vanished. There was a wild struggle for safety, in which even some members of the crew took part. An enormous Scotchman, named Gibson, who had for many years been a pilot, assumed command in the interests of law and order. With a roar like a lion he hurled himself into the panic-

stricken crowd and, seizing one of the leaders, lifted him clear off the deck and hurled him into the sea.

"Next come, next served!" he shouted, and the band of rebels, after a moment's wavering, fell sullenly back. The last boat was lowered into the sea. Left behind on the deck, faced with inevitable death, the abandoned met the crisis in their various ways. Some stared mutely before them, some wrung their hands, some prayed, some called for father or mother, or wife or children, some appealed desperately for help to England or to America and, like a concert in hell, the babel went up to the throne of God. There was yet a slender hope, the life-belt. The victims might look forward to keeping afloat for hours in the icy water till they were picked up by a steamer, or, more likely, until cramp or weakness brought the end.

Or, might the *Gigantic* still float? She was now lying on her side, her decks like mountain slopes, but if only she held there was still a chance that, clinging to her as to a desert island, the survivors might yet be saved. A thousand prayers rose to heaven:

"Lord, keep her afloat!"

But heaven was distant and cold and heard nothing.

In a corner of the steerage deck crouched a forgotten woman. Too weak to struggle toward the boat, she lay ill and miserable longing for death. The child she held in her arms was fatherless, for her husband, after a few weeks of life together, had beaten and deserted her. Dully she waited for death. But the child, born to hunger, misery and contempt, slept peacefully in her arms—wrecking nothing of the death so near at hand—dreaming dreams of sweetness and innocence. Neither hero nor coward—but outside the normal classifications of the world—the child a symbol like the Baptist, slept and smiled at the very jaws of death.

On the second-class deck a madman was being bound with cord. Van Houten, with foam on his lips, was raving for his money, striking out to right and left, calling aloud for a chance of rescue. The man who closed with and finally overcame him was the young American millionaire who, having seen his wife plunge to her death from that ill-fated boat, was facing his end like a hero and, in the work of discipline and rescue, toiling at Hastings's side.

But neither van Houten in his lunacy, nor the millionaire in his heroism, were care-free or happy. Only the tiny child in its mother's arms slept and smiled at death.

Minute followed minute. Nothing happened. No steamer, no mast, no funnel appeared on the horizon, nothing that could save the miserable remnants of the great *Gigantic*. And then, without a moment's warning, with the roar of a volcano in eruption there came a great explosion. Into the air rose a column of black smoke, lit with darting flames, and, with a turmoil as though a giant were being drowned in a boiling cauldron, the *Gigantic* blew up and was engulfed in the sea. The water closed over the shattered monster; the seething disturbance died rapidly down and was smoothed away in gradually widening circles. Nothing remained. No point of rigging, no fluttering pennant, no fragment of that flag of England which had so proudly flown from the *Gigantic's* masthead, broke the un pitying surface of the Atlantic. Only, littered along the sea, the helpless sport of swell and current, bodies, planks of wood, empty bottles, bits of furniture. . . . The sun shone wisely in the sky; the sea intoned once more her eternal chant. . . .

Gone . . . gone . . . irretrievably gone. . . .

It was exactly twenty minutes since the torpedo had struck the vessel's engine-room.

CHAPTER XVI

ONE of the boats from the wrecked liner toiled over the sea, fighting its pitiable fight with wind and wave. The last to shoot safely beyond the treacherous whirlpool of the sinking ship, it struggled along into the emptiness of distance, knowing nothing of the fate of the other boats, too deeply concerned with its own chances to trouble about its fellows.

Eighty persons, men, women, children and a few sailors, were crowded into its tiny space. Gibson, who had taken charge of this boat after quelling the panic-stricken rush on the steerage deck, sat at the back and held in his hand the fate of these eighty fugitives. Sailors toiled at the oars and the little boat now rode high on the crest of a wave, now sank into a valley that seemed many miles from the place of the catastrophe. The toilsome course lay through the litter of the wreck. Now and again the sea was troubled with sinister movements and every glance thrown out of the boat met terrible evidence of the great disaster. Joists and barrels, boxes and pieces of furniture, an occasional life-belt, fragments of sailcloth, bits of basketwork, all these and much else floated absurdly, revoltingly, upon the sea. Frequently the horrified eyes of the survivors would see an arm, a leg, a head of one of the victims, and it was as though death itself were grinning horribly at the refugees, thrusting an evil head from under the waves and, the next moment, plunging once more out of sight into unimaginable horrors hidden far below.

The sailors counted: One, two! One . . . two! The oars smote the water with the regularity of clockwork. The strong arms were at full stretch to prevent the boat capsizing.

Suddenly Gibson cried:

"Let go! Get back!"

Gripping the side a black hand and arm had risen from the sea. Once more death looked over the side of the little boat. She swayed dangerously, as with a despairing effort the negro cook Elias pulled himself level with the gunwale.

"Save me!" he gasped.

"Let go! We shall capsize!"

But the black hand held on. The wretched creature swept the terrified boatload with eyes already blazing with agony and faintness.

"Don't let a soul move!" thundered the Scotsman. "Let go, you devil, or we shall sink!"

But still the black hand held on.

The boat was tilting more and more perilously. The negro seemed to be making a yet more violent struggle for safety. Gibson came to a sudden and terrible decision. Snatching one of the heavy oars from the nearest sailor he brought it down with all his might on the negro's head. An inarticulate cry, and the head and arms disappeared, only a tinge of red staining the surface of the indifferent sea. With horror in their eyes the fugitives in the little boat sat silent and motionless. The sailors bent over their oars, slowly forcing the boat out of the area of terror and despair.

The time passed. And still for hour after hour, far and wide, no sail, no speck of any sort to break the monotony of the sea. The sailors rowed steadily. The sun was dropping fast to westward. How long was it since the *Gigantic* sank? Four hours, five hours, perhaps six hours . . . ? The fugitives did

not know. They had lost sense of time and of place, for they had no watch, no compass, no map. Only the slant of the setting sun assured them that they were crawling northwards.

The sun set. And still no funnel, no sail, no mast in the vast circle of the darkening sea, now stained with purple into a shimmering lake of blood by the dying sun. Gradually the purple died and the sea became pale and cold. The night wind began to blow, ruffling the surface of the water. Now and again a tiny wave splashed into the boat, as though in play.

"Start bailing!" ordered the Scotsman.

"May I help, Mr. Gibson?"

It was Pitt's voice, thin and eager, from the corner where he cowered.

"Go ahead, young 'un!" replied Gibson. And the boy, seizing one of the bailing cans, set patiently to work. There were several of them thus engaged and, with the regularity of clockwork, as the water slopped over the side into the boat, they threw it out again.

So the hours passed and the little company sat, half numbed with fatigue, half on edge with fear of death. From under the seat on which he sat, Gibson drew a tin box. Anxiously he counted the biscuits.

"Six biscuits for each of us," he said, "and after that there is nothing. You've got the drinking water, Lyon?"

"Yes."

"No one is to drink without asking me. Three times a day a quarter mugful. That should make the water last three days."

The biscuits were passed round in miserable silence; the boatload crunched their unappetizing meal.

It was now night. The sailors wrapped their coats over women and children, and in the darkness the tireless beat of the oars went on, one . . . two, one

. . . two. . . . The boat crawled over the sea like a ghost. Those on board neither slept nor watched. A kind of half-unconsciousness possessed them, caused by the emotions and exertions of the day now past. The spring moon climbed into the sky and threw a spectral light over the ocean and over the tiny boat. . . . The waves sang their magic song, a song of witchery and fear.

Gibson and the sailors and also little Pitt peered ceaselessly through the darkness for a possible light. Gibson had a few rockets in his pocket and got these in readiness to send up, should there appear in the distance any glimmer that spoke of a passing ship. If only the water had not got to them and made them damp and useless . . . !

The silence of the boat was broken now and again by whispered words, words of comfort or of hope, words of complaint or of pity. Thirst, cramp, numbness of hands and feet afflicted all alike. Only Pitt seemed tireless. Hour after hour he bailed and bailed, changing the cans from one hand to another, seemingly triumphant by spirit alone over bodily weakness. And while he bailed his sharp young ears never ceased to sweep the surrounding sea. A ship would come; a ship must come; else why had he been raised from his bed of sickness . . . ? The Baptist's words rang in his ears:

"Are you afraid of death?"

And, again, a little later:

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows!"

"Mr. Gibson," said the boy suddenly.

"Hullo!"

"Look over there . . . ! Right over there where a cloud shadow makes the dark patch on the sea. . . . I can see a little light. . . . What is it?"

"I do not know, my lad. Starlight, perhaps. . . ."

"But look! The cloud shadow is getting larger and still I see the light. . . . Look! It is brighter now! Can't you see it, Mr. Gibson?"

"Yes. I see it now!"

"And I! And I! And I! . . ." One after another the sailors joined in the cry. They strained their eyes into the darkness. Pitt spoke again:

"It's a ship, Mr. Gibson. It must be a ship!"

The joyful, almost incredible news ran from mouth to mouth. A ship! A ship! A ship! . . . A spark of hope was lit in the hearts of the fugitives. Eighty pairs of eyes strove to pierce the darkness. And the light grew brighter.

"It's a ship!" shouted Pitt in delight. "I can see it plainly now. Let off one of those rockets, Mr. Gibson."

As the woods awake at the first kiss of spring, so the spirits of the shipwrecked boatload stirred into life. Gibson felt in his pocket and drew out one of the three rockets. With Pitt's help a sheltered place was made with hands and caps in which to light the fuse. The string fizzled a little and then went out.

"Damn!" said Gibson under his breath. "The thing's wet."

He took the second rocket. Once more a careful shelter was made; once more a match was put to the fuse. For a moment it seemed as though this also would fizzle and go out, but it caught, and, with a lightning upward rush, rose like a streak of fire into the darkness, poised a moment in the air, and then fell in a shower of stars toward the sea. All eyes were turned toward the approaching light. Surely

some reply would come. . . . The minutes passed, one, two, three, five, and still in desperation they clung to their hope. But nothing happened. Only the distant light came nearer and nearer.

"Try again!" urged Pitt.

"I've only one left, lad," was Gibson's answer.

And for a little while, hardly able to breathe for anxiety, they watched the light grow slowly nearer.

There could be no doubt at all. It was a small ship. Probably a fishing-smack. If only it saw them they would be saved. . . . And Gibson determined to make his last attempt. The third rocket shot up into the darkness, broke into its many-colored stars and vanished. Once again agonizing minutes of dying hope. One minute, two, three, five. And still nothing happened, no sign, no answering rocket, no siren. . . . Nothing! Despairingly they gazed into the darkness, praying for some reply. A quarter of an hour passed. Nothing. . . .

"The light is getting dimmer, Mr. Gibson."

Gibson nodded.

"Dimmer . . . dimmer . . . dimmer . . ." whispered the despairing wretches.

The light faded and finally vanished. Had it all been a mirage? If it was a real ship, the crew must have seen the two rockets. . . . But perhaps they had. . . . It was war-time and the ordinary rules of rescue no longer applied.

Once more the sun rose out of the sea. The eighty refugees were very cold. For eighteen hours they had had no food but a few small biscuits, no drink but a sip of water. The second day went by and still no ship appeared. The arms of the lusty sailors could not row much more. Despair, hunger, cold, cramp, the fear of death on every face. . . . Only Pitt seemed to have any courage left.

"A ship will come! I tell you a ship must come!" he repeated again and again.

About five o'clock in the afternoon they threw a dead body into the sea. It was a three-year-old child, which had succumbed to the cold and privations of the night. The mother wept and her hysteria spread to the other women. The men had tears in their eyes. The sailors sat with clenched fists. Misery . . . misery . . . misery. . . . Death were better than this. But as yet they could not die.

"A ship must come! A ship must come!" repeated Pitt.

The second night descended on the sea, a night of cloud without moonlight. Instead, a fine rain soaked relentlessly the crouching figures in the little boat. Wet to the skin, faint with hunger, they waited dully for the morning. Most of them were now sunk in an idiotic stolidity, caring little what happened so long as something came to put an end to their suffering. The sailors rowed ever more wearily and with physical fatigue came a nerve exhaustion which must, sooner or later, override the habits of discipline.

Contrary to Gibson's strict command, one young fellow had drunk seawater. He was now tortured with thirst, racked with horrible pains. He groaned and sobbed; but his agony was lost in the hopeless lethargy of his fellow travelers.

But suddenly, unmistakably, they heard the note of a siren. Unwilling at first to believe it, they were forced, with each repetition to realize that it was actually a steamer's siren. It sounded from out of the blue distance as from another world; like the last trump it floated across the waste of waters. The lethargy of the fugitives was changed to wild excitement. They hugged and kissed each other, unbalanced by the thought of rescue at this eleventh hour. It

was no imagination, no mirage. It was a large steamer flying the Spanish flag, doing the trip from Barcelona to Liverpool.

Pitt, when he came to himself in the cabin of the *Cataluna*, warmed with blankets and with hot tea, laughed and sobbed at once, when he heard the vessel was bound for Liverpool.

"I knew it, I knew it," he murmured, and once again sobbed and laughed.

Of the others, many seemed quite unhinged by their deliverance and from the decks of the *Cataluna* there rose to heaven, like some unearthly thanksgiving chorus, the prayers and laughter of the wretches who had been snatched from the jaws of death.

CHAPTER XVII

ON the surface of the sea a long trail of oil marked the sinister track of some evil traveler in the depths. At once filthy, crudely violet and yellow, it shone in the sun. And now suddenly, from the oil-flecked and blood-stained water, the submarine itself rose gradually to the surface. The crew gave almost a cry of relief. For hours they had remained in their oil-soaked clothes, crammed together in the little engine-room among the crowded mechanism, some under the conning tower, some with the torpedoes, some at the fatal torpedo-tubes. One after another the twenty-two of them climbed to the lookout gallery and gazed once more on the sea, the sunlight, and the sky. They filled their lungs with pure air to drive out the poison vapors which in their underwater prison they had been compelled to breathe. They felt the petrol fumes still clogging their breath, their eyes smarted and burned, their very digestions seemed to work with pain and difficulty.

Down there, in the underwater coffin, Bischoff had tried to cheer their spirits by playing his concertina. But once the submarine got within range and was preparing to fire a torpedo, the rattle and snorting of the accumulators had drowned all other sounds. But in desperate unison they shouted a chorus, as though in the hope of deafening themselves to the roar of the sea over their heads, the noise of the engines, the horror of the whole proceeding.

Captain Stirn and his Lieutenant, von Wimpfen, kept their eyes glued to the periscope. In attendance were two sailors, Müller and Dietrich. And then had

come the moment, the hideous, fatal moment, the moment which had made beat more quickly even these twenty-two hearts, steeled to ruthlessness by battle lust and by contempt for death. There, passing on the surface of the sea, was the mighty ship with two thousand souls on board, the *Gigantic*, on her voyage to England. And they had received orders that the *Gigantic*, come what may, must be sunk and sunk without a trace.

The captain's pitiless voice struck terribly on the ears of his crew:

"Ready? . . . Let her go!"

And the torpedo shot on its way through the water. The rebound was so great that the submarine seemed, like a horse suddenly gored with the spur, to leap upwards toward the surface. The crew clutched at anything handy to keep their balance, but the submarine soon steadied herself and they went about their duty without emotion. Captain Stirn, watching through the periscope, saw the hideous success of the torpedo, and, like a child at a Christmas party entertained by a magic lantern, gazed—so tiny were the proportions he seemed to be gazing from miles away—at the end of the stricken liner. He saw the *Gigantic* sway and totter; he saw the boats, like little dots, put off and row away; at last he saw the steamer lean more and more and finally sink. . . . Now that the submarine was on the surface, the captain with his crew profited as best they might from their short respite in the open air. It was dangerous to stay too long. Who knew what might not come that way, to what dreadnought or cruiser the *Gigantic's* despairing cries had reached? The captain had removed his greasy overalls and stood there, clean and smart in his uniform. In the middle thirties, his bronzed and lean face spoke of energy and power.

"What is that there, von Wimpfen?"

"Where, sir?"

"I seem to see something right at the back there, by the propeller."

Two of the sailors were sent to examine. As they did not return immediately, von Wimpfen cried:

"What have you found there, Birk? Is anything wrong?"

After a short pause, the voice of the sailor was heard:

"A woman's body, sir, caught by the hair in the propeller. Shall we cut the hair and throw the body in the sea?"

Von Wimpfen turned to the captain with a look of interrogation. Stirn walked along the boat toward the propeller and, leaning over, saw the dead body of a woman, the features smashed beyond recognition, roped to the submarine by a mass of wonderful golden hair. Even in its soaked condition the clothing was evidently expensive and rich. On the slender fingers were many rings.

"Loose the body carefully," ordered the captain, "and bring it on board."

For a moment the sailors stared in amazement. Had the captain forgotten the risk of lying like this on the surface of the sea, that he wasted time hauling corpses on board? But the famous German discipline conquered curiosity and they bent quickly to their task.

"Maybe we can find some means of embalming the body temporarily," went on the captain as though to himself, "for I can't bring myself to throw it back into the sea. Take off all valuables and things of interest and bring them to me in the cabin."

Ten minutes later Stirn gave the order to dive. After a moment's bustle the valves of the submarine closed automatically, the accumulators began to work

once more, the electric light blazed up, and the conqueror of the *Gigantic* slipped away unseen from the scene of its grisly victory.

Von Wimpfen was put temporarily in command and Stirn stood before the table in his cabin with, spread out in front of him, the objects taken from the woman's body. Among these he noticed a small waterproof case in which he found a book, finely bound in red leather and locked with a tiny golden key. Brushing aside the bag containing money, the wedding ring, the other jewelry, Stirn opened the book and there read, written on the first page, in the handwriting of a woman of character:

Diary of Arthur Robert Withcomb Roade, kept by his mother, Mabel Roade, née Withcomb.

It was not easy to see whether Captain Stirn was reading the book or not. His eyes never left the pages and his hand turned the leaves. Was he reading the words that followed?

Arthur Robert Withcomb Roade was born on March 15, 1915, on Long Island, in the State of New York, in the house of his mother's father, Henry Withcomb. When born he weighed just over seven pounds.

The hand of Captain Stirn turned another page. No one could say whether he was reading or whether the words made any impression on his mind.

To-day for the first time his mother thought he smiled. His father is going home to the Foreign Office in London and we are crossing together. If anything happens to the child, I, his mother, will kill myself.

Another page was turned. And still the captain may have read or may have merely gazed unseeing before him.

We can find no wet-nurse to cross to England with us. What shall we do on board? Some way must be found to provide milk at the necessary heat.

Stirn seemed to turn the pages more quickly. His hand shook a little, as though his nerves were getting out of control.

Anonymous letters told us that the ship would be sunk. Nobody believes it, but I pray day and night for my son. . . .

Spasmodically Stirn's fingers crumpled the page together—so violently that the paper was torn, but this the captain did not notice, for the words he had just read thundered in his brain above the roar of the engines, and their beat seemed to be saying: "Murderer of mother's love! . . . Murderer of mother's love."

I have made a curious discovery. There is a holy man on board the ship; more than that, I believe Christ Himself is on board. My husband keeps us apart, but I will find some way of taking the child to Him, so that He may lay His hand upon it and bless it so that it may live, for I am mortally afraid we shall be sunk.

Stirn had promised von Wimpfen that he would be relieved in two hours, for the task of watching at the periscope was nerve-wearing and fatiguing. The lieutenant stood in the conning tower and waited. The two hours had passed some while ago and still there was no sign of the captain. He called to Bischoff:

"Knock on the cabin-door and see whether anything has happened to the captain."

Bischoff knocked three times. No answer.

"Open the door and go in!" called the lieutenant.

Bischoff pushed open the cabin-door and looked in.

"If you please, sir . . ." he began.

Stirn sat at the table, his eyes fixed on the book before him. He neither moved nor made any reply.

"I beg your pardon, sir . . . Lieutenant von Wimpfen . . ." then, seeing the vacant look which the captain turned toward him, he burst out: "I am Bischoff, sir. Don't you know me?"

But the captain made this strange reply:

"Steward! The lady in the first class, the lady with the golden hair, tells me to tell you . . ."

The captain got up suddenly. Never in his life had Bischoff seen such a strange, unearthly look as that which his commanding officer threw round the cabin. Instantly he remembered reading in the newspapers cases of lunacy caused by the horrors of war. To his terror he saw that Stirn held a revolver in his right hand. Bischoff mustered up courage and, watching the revolver carefully, made one more attempt:

"Captain Stirn . . ."

"Don't you hear me, steward! I shall shoot you instantly if you do not obey me. I was telling you that the lady with the golden hair . . ."

The captain raised his revolver. Stepping forward quickly, Bischoff knocked it suddenly from his hand, so that it fell in a corner under the table. At this moment the lieutenant, curious to see what was happening, appeared on the scene.

"What's the matter, Bischoff?" he asked.

Stirn turned to his lieutenant:

"I'm glad you have come, purser. This insolent steward chooses to disregard my orders . . ."

When they tried, with kindness and friendly words, to calm Stirn back to reason, he became all of a sudden a raving madman. With difficulty the sailors overpowered him and bound him tightly, and so, a pitiable bundle, they brought him into Wilhelmshaven and handed him over to the authorities of the military asylum.

* * * * *

Forty-eight hours after the catastrophe the news of the loss of the *Gigantic* reached New York. In every corner of the United States the horrible announcement seemed to mark not only the end of an

age, but a premature crumbling of the epoch that would follow. In the Fifth Avenue Club in New York, Le-vick, the young engineer, passed the "special extra" of the *New York Times* to his Uncle Haynes. The sheet was passed from hand to hand. Not a word was spoken. All were struck dumb with horror. At last Haynes, with a sort of bitter self-command, pulled his check book from his pocket and wrote a check for a thousand dollars. Rising from his chair, he walked over to where his friend Putnam sat and handed him the check. Putnam alone, in a freak of humor, had wagered on the *Gigantic's* loss. Mechanically and without a word of thanks he took the slip of paper, folded it in his pocket, and with bowed head walked out of the club.

PART II

THE THIRTEEN REINCARNATIONS OF CAPTAIN STIRN

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CHAPTER I

“**M**URDERER!”

The miserable man struggled to his feet with a cry. The warder Hoffmann laid a calming hand on the victim's shoulder and for a little while Captain Stirn stared motionless before him. Ten minutes ago Geheimrat Gollmer, the director of the asylum, had visited the padded cell and instructed Hoffmann not let the patient out of his sight for a minute. Every two hours the warder would be changed, as this care of violent patients in solitary confinement was responsible and fatiguing. Doctor Gollmer considered it unlikely that the patient would live much beyond the night. Promising to return a little before midnight, the director had gone his way and Hoffmann had settled down to his two-hour vigil. It was between nine and ten o'clock in the evening. High in the roof of the cell a green shaded light threw its dim rays on the padded walls, on the thick mattress that covered the floor. The only window was heavily barred, although it was placed near the ceiling out of human reach.

Hoffmann, having been for years a warder of the asylum, sat down philosophically enough on the chair in the corner and gazed, with a blend of sympathy and

indifference, at the rigid folds and the long sleeves of the strait waistcoat, into which the patient had been strapped.

Stirn sank down once more into the corner and turned his face to the wall.

"Mabel!"

The name came like a ghostly whisper from his lips.

Hoffmann took no further notice. He did not recognize the name and he knew that women and women's names often haunted the crazy minds of lunatics. Madmen usually chattered of some girl or other. The warder decided that Stirn was reliving some vanished love-affair. The madman spoke again:

"What are these clothes you are dressing me in, Mabel?"

"I am dressing you in the uniform of a Moujik; I am changing you into a Moujik."

The question and answer came rapidly and without interruption from Stirn's lips. Whereas a few minutes before he had foamed at the mouth, he now lay quite quietly, his face turned to the wall, his voice normal.

Hoffmann drew a newspaper from his pocket and glanced at the war news. Three thousand prisoners. . . . Quarter of a mile advance. . . . Heavy enemy losses. . . . He had read that kind of thing a hundred times. It did not seem to make much difference. . . .

Suddenly the patient stood up. Hoffmann nodded, almost asleep.

"Whither are you leading me, Mabel?"

Stirn made a motion as though to step forward, but his legs were hampered by the restraining garment and he stumbled and fell on to the mattress floor.

"What tower is that, Mabel?"

"That is the church tower of Gilgenburg. . . ."

"And that one there?"

"That is the church tower of Tannenberg."

"Where am I? What have you done to me, Mabel?"

"You are the Moujik, Ivan Mirsky, belonging to the Army of the Narew. The whole army will be drowned in the Masurian Lakes. You understand?"

"The whole army?"

"The whole army, except those who will already have met their death in the woods. All the tree-trunks in the woods have been drenched with oil. Hindenburg has ordered it."

"The tree-trunks drenched with oil?"

"And you will be one of the last to remain alive among these marshes and in the depths of these forests, Ivan Mirsky. Tell me, Moujik, do you remember?"

"Do I remember what?"

"Whence you came?"

Stirn lay now so that the faint light of the electric globe shone on his face. He was the merest ruin of the man who, but a few days ago, had sunk the *Gigantic*. His complexion was ashen gray, patched with dirty white. His once plentiful light brown hair was now scanty and the color of snow. But for the unholy light of madness which shone in his eyes he might have been a corpse found lying in a suddenly reopened coffin. But the eyes flittered hither and thither with the uneasy, quavering light of a dying flame.

It seemed as though, all of a sudden, the restless eyes became calmer:

"Whence I came?" he whispered. "Of course, whence I came. From the little village on the Don. From my father's cottage among the waving wheat. And my mother, on that last evening, singing the old song . . ."

"What song was she singing, Moujik?"

"The song of the Red Sarafan, Mabel, singing with my sister Sonia."

"Sing me that song."

In a ghastly voice the madman croaked out the Russian folk tune.

"And then?"

"Oh, then they came and took me off, and half the village with me. All the young men!"

"Who came?"

"The Cossacks, who were ranging the country north and south, fetching out the conscripts who did not wish to go. They told us we should be in Berlin in six weeks."

"And now see where you are, Ivan Mirsky! . . . With the church tower of Gilgenburg over there, and that of Tannenberg over there and all around you the marshes and the army of the Narew. . . . They are surrounded, the men of that army of whom you are one and there is no way out, except through the swamp or through the forest, and in the forest all the tree-trunks are smeared with oil. . . . You will be one of the last alive, Ivan Mirsky!"

"Mother of sorrows! Have mercy on me!"

"There is no help in prayer, Ivan Mirsky, for the army of the Narew will drown, drown like young kittens and you cannot escape. They will hunt you into the wood, where the tree-trunks are smeared with oil, and the woods will be set on fire, and you will be one of the last. . . ."

"Why? Tell me why, Mabel!"

The reply came from the madman's mouth in a piteous moan:

"So that your eyes may see everything and your ears may hear everything."

Stirn struggled to his knees and knelt on the mattress. His lunatic eyes roved over the floor, walls and

ceiling of the cell, and rested on the warder nodding over his newspaper on the chair in the corner. The sights they saw were not mattresses, sleepy warder, shaded electric light, but treacherous swamp, alder trees, forest, little stagnant ponds, forever and ever, world without end. He cried out suddenly:

"I cannot endure it, Mabel! It is too terrible to endure!"

"You *must* endure it!"

The madman struggled to cover his eyes and ears with his hands, but the long sleeves of the strait waistcoat hampered his movements.

"Fire! Fire! Everything is burning! The villages and the woods and the marsh and the lakes—all are burning, and they are shooting!"

"Who are shooting?"

"The Prussians, the Russians. . . . Ah! There is that devil. . . .!"

"Whom have you seen, Mirsky?"

"Don't you see him? That Cossack devil who hounded me into the fire with a whip. Don't you see him?"

"Is that the Cossack that came and fetched you from the little village on the Don?"

"That is he. Let me go, devil! Liar! We are not in Berlin. . . . What are all these marshes where everything burns? Gilgenburg and Neidenburg and Tannenberg and Hohenstein and Allenstein—all in flames. . . . And the murderers with their bayonets sweeping down upon us. . . . Mother of God! Drink! Give me something to drink, Mabel!"

"What are you calling for, Ivan Mirsky?"

"Something to drink! For the fire burns and the smoke stifles and the sun is scorching my body! For God's sake give me something to drink! My water bottle is empty. . . . See how the sun gleams on the

smoke of the burning villages. . . . Nothing to drink since yesterday. . . . Mother of God, have mercy. . . .!"

The madman's desperate cries aroused the warder. Taking a little wooden bowl from a shelf, he filled it with water, and, approaching the patient, put the bowl to the tortured lips which were once more flecked with foam. But Stirn ground his teeth as though in the grip of apoplexy and the water trickled down his chin on to the floor. He fell back on to the mattress once again.

"I shall be one of the last to die! What is happening? Air! Give me air! I am choking!"

The wretch gave a cry like a wounded beast. Hoffmann shook his head and looked at him sympathetically. He could do nothing to help, for the sensation of choking was only another figment of the poor, mad brain and no more real than had been the burning thirst.

"What is it? Why can't I breathe?"

"Poison gas! Fumes from the shells. . . ."

"Forward! Are you asleep, animal? Forward. . . . Not the whip. . . .! For God's sake, not the whip. . . .! See, I am running. . . . running. . . . I can hear nothing now. . . . Every noise is drowned in thunder. . . . What is happening, Mabel?"

"Artillery!"

"Forward! Forward, wretch! . . . Damn you! Leave me alone. . . . I am running, running as hard as I can. . . . I cannot run because I stumble. . . . why do I keep on stumbling, Mabel?"

"You are stumbling over corpses, Ivan Mirsky. There are four thousand corpses piled on the ground and that is why you stumble."

"Human corpses, Mabel?"

"The corpses of your countrymen, Ivan Mirsky, young men from the grainlands of the Don."

"These are no human beings, Mabel. . . . Look at their faces! Apes, toads, snakes, tigers, hyenas, jaguars, all wild beasts driven from the marsh and from the forest, and spattered with filth . . . these are no men, no men such as I knew among the grainlands of the Don!"

"Look more closely, Ivan Mirsky. Even at this moment you are stumbling over the body of your friend Nika Trostin, your dearest friend in that little village on the Don. Look again. Do you not recognize him?"

"Nika? . . . Nika? . . . Who was to marry my sister Sonia?"

"The same, Ivan Mirsky, but his head has been carried away by shrapnel. . . . Over there you will find his head, Ivan Mirsky, in the little ditch by the alder-bush. . . ."

"No, no, no . . . !"

The madman's frenzied cries were little more than inarticulate sounds. Throwing himself full length on the ground, he sought to bury his head in the mattress, as a mole would burrow to escape its pursuers.

"You must not hide your head, Ivan Mirsky. You must see, see. . . . You must look at that thing over there. . . . That is a Russian artillery brigade, Ivan Mirsky. . . ."

"That pile, that ragged heap of remnants? That is no artillery brigade, Mabel!"

"It was one. . . . But one of the enemy's batteries caught it full. . . ."

"No, Mabel, you are lying! Those fragments of horses, all that mess of blood, is no Russian brigade, smart in its uniform . . . !"

"Nevertheless, it was one, Ivan Mirsky, a whole brigade, smart in its uniform, but the enemy's fire found it and that is the result. Hark! Do you not

hear the guns? You must dig, dig a trench in the ground and hide yourself. Take your spade and crouch low in the trench that you will dig! For heaven is raining fire and brimstone!"

"I have no spade."

"Then dig with your fingers!"

It happened that Stirn's fingers found a hole in the strait waistcoat and with a struggle he released his right hand. He started scratching at the mattress.

"What are you up to now?" asked the warder.

The answer, when it came, was not given to Hoffmann, but addressed the spectre of Mabel Roade, which haunted Stirn's imaginings.

"I am digging . . .!"

His fevered fingers tore a hole in the mattress cover, and, crying under his breath: "I am digging, Mabel," he began to pull out the flock and strew it about the cell. Hoffmann, knowing well the superhuman strength given to many lunatics when restrained in any way, made no attempt to interfere. Soon, however, Stirn stopped of his own accord and fell back as though in sudden apathy. But it was not long before his hauntings began again.

"Mabel!" he called. "It is water, not earth that I am digging! I cannot dig in swamp!"

"It is into the swamp that they will throw you, your destroyers!"

"I see them coming, Mabel! Masses of them, column after column, brigade after brigade, an whole army corps! Mabel! The ground is beginning to give way! Save me!"

"Hold to the alder-bush, Ivan Mirsky. Climb as high as you can, for you must be the last man alive!"

The madman, with a frantic effort, attempted to scramble up the padded wall; but time after time he fell back on to the floor.

"I have climbed up, Mabel!" he gasped at last.

"And what do you see?"

"I see a great army."

"That is the army of General Schilisky, sinking in the swamp. Can they save themselves by running into the forest?"

"They will save themselves, Mabel."

"I wonder. For the forest will burn; all the tree-trunks are smeared with oil, smeared by infuriated peasantry whose houses have been burned to the ground."

"I have burned nothing, Mabel! I have plundered nothing! For three days I have had nothing but biscuit to eat, and I am faint with hunger!"

"Possibly not, Ivan Mirsky, but it is the innocent and not the guilty who suffer in this war."

"The innocent?"

"Remember my child! He was innocent and he was murdered. And now you, Ivan Mirsky, though it be the Cossacks that have plundered and pillaged, are to suffer for others' guilt! It is a punishment for the crime of these Cossacks that men are being burned alive in the forests, where the tree-trunks have been smeared with oil. Do you hear those cries rising from the burning forest behind the sea of flame, behind the cloud of choking smoke?"

"Those are no cries, Mabel; it is the noise of a hurricane!"

"If you will, Ivan Mirsky. Perhaps it was a hurricane that resounded over the Atlantic the day the *Gigantic* was sunk."

"The *Gigantic*?"

"You know nothing of the *Gigantic*, Ivan Mirsky, but on the day that great ship was sunk, the ocean boiled like a hell kettle and there was the noise of a great hurricane."

"A noise such as I hear now, Mabel?"

"The hurricane you hear now is the agonized cry of ten thousand Moujiks such as you, Ivan Mirsky, young peasants with fathers and mothers and sisters waiting anxiously and patiently for weeks and months and years in their little villages among the grainlands of the Don. Well may they wait, for the young men are drowning in the swamp! Hold tight to your alder-bush! If your arms are strong enough you may be one of the last to die. Do not forget that at your feet the swamp is waiting. For hours, for days and nights, those wretched men over there will scream and cry. And for years and years men will dig and turn up Russian corpses, and their decay will make the air a pestilence; for their number is legion. So watch and watch carefully, Ivan Mirsky, and hearken to what men have not seen and heard for hundreds of years—not since the days of Cannae when the army of Rome sank in the swamps of Pontus. At that time the victor's name was Hannibal; it is now Hindenburg. . . ."

"Mother of God!" screamed the madman suddenly.

"Drown now as they did, like the cannon food you are!"

"The tree is giving way! I cannot hold on any longer. . . . I am beginning to sink . . .!"

"As they did . . . Ivan Mirsky. . . ."

Silence descended suddenly upon the padded cell.

CHAPTER II

“TAKE care that you wear the robes of priesthood with dignity. Remember the words of Him that sent you.”

“Which words, Mabel?”

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake: Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Ye are the salt of the earth.”

The sick man was once again in the grip of his lunatic visions. Hoffmann watched him for a little while and then became engrossed once again in his newspaper. He had often heard patients carry on conversations with themselves in this way. Although the horror of Stirn's ravings surpassed those of his previous experience, the warder did not allow himself to be unduly exercised as the words flowed, now monotonously and slowly, now in a violent and spasmodic rush, from the madman's lips.

“Where am I?”

“You are Théodore Picard, curé of Seuries. The soutane suits you well. You look every inch a priest. I hope your heart is pure. Look around you. What do you see?”

“Wonderful peace!”

“Peace indeed. In the valley, cottages and houses, on the gentle hills fruit trees and the ripening corn; below you, red roofs plumed with the smoke of cottage fires; to your right the shepherd, followed by his dog, crossing the heath. In this little village are six

hundred souls who know and love each other, who have their little quarrels, their joys and sorrows, their illnesses and even their sins. Six hundred souls entrusted to your care, Théodore Picard, and that is Seuries. The village lies between the Sambre and the Meuse, near Florennes in Belgium, between the two roads of which one leads through Romerée to Mariembourg and the other through Merlemont to Philippeville and the north. That is—or rather that was Seuries."

"Why 'was,' Mabel?"

"Because what you now see is only memory."

"Where am I now, then?"

"You are in your presbytery, sitting in your study, thinking over the sermon that to-morrow morning you will deliver in the tiny church for the good of your parishioners' souls. It is an earnest and sad sermon, because the enemy is in the land and because there have been burnings just north of Dinant. Burnings, do you hear?"

"Yes I heard 'burnings,' Mabel. Who is with me in the house?"

"Your eighty-year-old mother, curé, who can hardly walk and whom they will have to push out to see the shooting. . . ."

"To see the shooting . . . ? My old mother . . . ?"


"Yes, curé. But be of good heart, for you will have great reward in heaven."

"And who else?"

"Your two sisters, the unmarried one Therèse, who keeps house for you, and your married sister who has fled to you with her four children, because her home has been burned."

"Who is that boy yonder, Mabel?"

"That is your nephew, Georges. He is fourteen years old."



"But surely not also this child . . . ?"

"Certainly; also the child. For they say that a girl of fifteen shot their colonel."

The madman made one of his convulsive efforts to cover his eyes with his hands, but once again the strait waistcoat prevented him. Suddenly he screamed and even Hoffmann, despite all his nonchalance, felt a chill of terror strike through his heart.

"Fire! Fire! Look, Mabel! What is burning?"

"Dinant is burning, curé, and Gerpennes and Rosée. . . . Little villages like Seuries left in flames and heaps of ashes by the advancing enemy. He is coming now, the enemy. You had better flee."

"But flee where to, Mabel? Into the cellar?"

"Into the cellar if you like, curé. It makes little difference, for they are coming . . . coming . . . and they will find you wherever you hide yourself, you, and your mother and your sisters and the children. . . . They will find them all."

"And when they have found us?"

"They will take you out to the cross-roads, to the cross-roads, where the little pack road goes down between high banks . . . quite near the rise in the ground, from which one can look right over to Romerée."

"And that is where it will happen?"

"Yes; from that little rise you will watch the bodies toppling one after another down the bank into the pack road—and you remember how lovely the banks are with flowers in spring time. . . ."

"Be silent! For God's sake, be silent."

"That will be all—except perhaps you will yourself get a blow on the head with a rifle butt, if you are still alive. . . ."

Stirn fell on his knees as though he had been struck. Hoffmann, whose nerves were getting out of control,

looked anxiously toward the door and then at his watch. He shook his head in disappointment. It was not yet time for the relief to come; and yet it seemed that he had been for hours in this terrible cell.

Stirn began again, in the shrill whimpering voice of a sick child.

"I am in the cellar now, Mabel. They are coming. . . . They are knocking on the door. . . . They are calling. . . . God have mercy on us! The door is breaking in. . . . See the flames outside dancing on the cellar wall!"

"They are the flames of Seuries, Théodore Picard, the flames of a hundred and thirty houses out of the hundred and forty that make up the little village you have dwelt in for so long. Also the church is burning and the schoolhouse."

"I am dazzled!"

"Dazzled perhaps, curé, but not blinded. Men are not merciful and it is decreed that you shall see everything."

"What is that crowd there, Mabel, being driven along the burning street?"

"Your parishioners, curé, the six hundred souls of the parish at Seuries, hounded from the ruins of their homes to the edge of the sunken pack road to pay in blood the penalty for the fault of the girl who shot the colonel."

"Will they all be shot, Mabel?"

"Every one. . . . Men, women, children, you yourself, curé. . . . the law of war demands it."

Huddled on the floor Stirn crouched as though he were being beaten with whips.

"But I have done nothing, Mabel! Nothing but good to everyone!"

"They have none of them done anything, curé, but your enemies say that the more hideous war is made

the more quickly it will be over. Come! Get up, you must go out to the ordeal by blood!"

The madman tottered toward the cell door, stumbled and fell at the warder's feet. Then he seized in his arms an extra mattress that lay in the corner, and dragged it back with him to the other side of the room.

"Where have you gone to, Mabel? I do not see you any more. This is a German non-commissioned officer! Where are you, Mabel?"

"Forward!"

"Mercy, I can hardly walk! Théodore! help me!"

"My old mother's voice! Mother . . .!"

"Get on, woman! Don't babble!"

"And the children, too, curé. . . . They are all being dragged out to the little rise above the pack road. You are on the way to your Golgotha, Théodore Picard!"

"Your voice again, Mabel! Where are you?"

Stirn's eyes lit up suddenly and he said: "And they took Jesus and led him away. And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha; where they crucified Him and two others with Him, on either side one and Jesus in the midst."

"You do well to think of Him, priest!"

It seemed as though for the moment the sick man grew actually calmer. His voice took on a tone of hopeless resignation and he stood upright, his hands crossed as though they were fettered, a light that seemed almost divine in his haggard ash-colored face.

"The man over there in the uniform is reading the sentence of death aloud. He says that all of us ought to be shot but that the court-martial in its mercy has decided only to shoot the men and to regard the women as prisoners of war. The sexes are now to be separated. . . . Listen, Mabel! Do you hear the noise of a

great flood? Now it seems more like the noise of damned souls wailing on the banks of Acheron . . . !"

"The sounds you hear, curé, are the tears of the women and children of Seuries, torn from their husbands and fathers and condemned to look on at the murder of their men. . . . You are among those men, Théodore Picard."

"Whose voice is that, Mabel, that I hear now?"

"Your sister's voice, curé."

"Let my husband free! He is innocent! We do not belong to Seuries at all . . . ! I can prove that he does not belong to Seuries . . . !"

"You see, curé, their only answer is to thrust him among the doomed men."

"I hear a child crying, Mabel."

"It is your little niece Antoinette, curé, and she is crying because her father is going to be shot. Listen to her crying for her father, curé. . . ."

The next words spoken by the sick man had actually a note of childish shrillness, as though his poor tortured brain was for the moment young again.

"Papa, papa . . . ! Forgive me when you get to heaven that I was ever naughty . . . !"

"I have nothing to forgive, Antoinette. You were always a sweet child. . . ."

To the warder's horror he saw the sick man's eyes fixed upon him and slowly glazing with tears. Then Stirn broke into an agony of sobbing, for he was undergoing the actual torture of the father torn from his wife and child.

"What are they doing with the boy, Mabel? What are they doing with little Georges?"

"One kind-hearted fellow tried to set him free but they have thrust him back now among those who are to be shot. Listen to his voice, curé, cutting the air like a sharp knife. Listen to his boyish voice. . . ."

"I am so young . . . ! I am too young to die . . . !"

"Hark to those cries, Mabel, cries to rouse the dead from their graves!"

"They are the cries of your mother and your sister, curé. Even one of the rough soldiers over there turns away to wipe his eyes. Even he weeps at the terrible duty he must perform. For he is young and he has a mother at home and he can still weep. But that woman over there, standing with the dry eyes, has no more tears."

"Why has she no more tears, Mabel?"

"Because to-day she has seen her three sons shot before her eyes, curé, and the mother who sees such a sight as that cannot weep, for horror has killed her tears. Her eyes are like those of the mother's whose children were drowned on the *Gigantic*, curé. . . . Her eyes are like my eyes, curé . . . !"

"Look, Mabel, they are drawing the victims up in a line! Already they are raising their rifles to fire!"

"Not yet, curé."

"Shoot us also . . . ! For pity's sake shoot us also!"

"What voices are those, Mabel?"

"The women of Seuries, curé, are wailing that they may be allowed to die with their men. . . . And the men are standing close by your side (for you are one of them, Théodore Picard), trying to signal with their bound hands to their wives and children, taking a last farewell. . . . They were your parishioners, curé, and they are dying bravely. . . . You will die as bravely as the other men of Seuries, Théodore Picard?"

"I will, Mabel. Father into Thy hands . . ."

The madman suddenly broke into an uncanny, sobbing laugh, which changed eerily into the shrill cry of a child.

"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. . . ."

"They have wounded you, curé, but not mortally. The finishing touch is still to come. . . ."

"The finishing touch!" gasped the wretched man, now crouched on the mattress floor.

"The blow on the head with the rifle butt, like a beast in the slaughter house."

"The blow is falling, Mabel. God . . . ! God in heaven . . . !"

With a loud cry, as though he had been struck violently with an axe, Stirn crumpled up on the floor. The warder hurried to the motionless figure.

"He is still alive," murmured Hoffmann. "Probably he will come to again in a minute or two. . . . Only a quarter past ten!"

CHAPTER III

“**Y**OU look very smart, poilu, in your clean, new uniform, with your red trousers! You have been mentioned in despatches and you have eight days’ leave to go to Paris and see your wife and children.”

“Who am I, Mabel?”

“Armand Didier of the 134th, and you have won distinction on the Marne.”

Stirn’s movements became extraordinary. He seemed to be clothing himself and smoothing down the folds of tunic and trousers. But the strait waistcoat made his movements cramped and ridiculous. He did not seem to notice the hindrance and, even when he stumbled and fell on to the floor, remained absorbed in the new occupation forced on him by his madness.

Hoffmann withdrew his eyes and sat brooding in his chair. Fortunate that he was such an old hand at this kind of game . . . ! How this war brutalized men! What was the good of showing pity for one unhappy individual among the millions who were being destroyed? This wretched creature before him was only one of a thousand, of ten thousand, of a hundred thousand cases equally horrible, many perhaps more horrible.

“Others have leave besides me?”

“Certainly! Moissonier of the 7th Company and Renard from the 9th and your friend Faucon from the 3d, and many others whom you do not know but who will travel with you to Paris. And you will sing on the journey—you will sing the Marseillaise and you will all be merry together. . . .”

Stirn broke into quavering song:

"Allons enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!"

Like a fiendish mockery of freedom the song echoed from the walls of the isolation cell.

"You are in the train now, poilu. Listen to the grinding of the wheels and the puffing of the engine. . . . There goes the whistle!"

A sudden shrill whistle came from the madman's lips.

"No more heaps of corpses, no more drum fire, no more shrapnel, no more bombs. . . . For eight days peace and quiet, poilu, for you are unwounded and you are going to Paris to see your wife and children."

Stirn's laughter was almost more ghastly than his crying. The warder shuddered, as the lunatic peals of delight echoed in his ears.

"I shall soon be in the little flat up under the roof in the Rue Lafayette, and I have not seen my wife since that terrible third of August, the day of the mobilization."

"True, poilu, you have not seen your wife nor your two little girls, Marthe and Yvonne. They are five and three now, poilu. And your old parents have come into Paris from Argenteuil, for they are very proud of you and they have read in the *Petit Parisien* your name in the list of names mentioned in despatches."

"It is nearly time we arrived, Mabel!"

"Here is the Paris station, poilu. Your wife is waiting for you on the platform.

"Henriette!"

Pathetic and terrible was the gesture of the sick man as he embraced the mattress and pressed it to him. He covered the soiled leather with kisses, murmuring:

"Henriette . . . ! Henriette . . . !" And then the names of his children in a confused stream of tears and laughter.

"Hop, hop, hop, hop, hop, hop!"

"Va mon petit cheval au galop!"

Clumsily he gestured, as though he were jiggling a child upon his knee.

"Are they not beautiful children, Mabel? Are they not sharp and clever? Tell the beautiful lady the story of Christmas, Yvonne. . . . Mabel, she is only three years old, and yet she can tell the story of Christmas without a mistake. All about the manger and the beasts and the star and the three kings. . . . Tell the beautiful lady the story, Yvonne. . . ."

"You've got a beard, papa!"

"She notices that! That's why they call me poilu, Yvonne. There is no time to shave in the trenches."

"Let us go home, Armand. Folk are staring at us."

"Come along, Henriette! Come along, children! Here's the omnibus."

To the best of his lunatic ability Stirn imitated the sound and movements of the omnibus lumbering through the streets of Paris.

"There is coffee ready at home, Armand; coffee and brioches . . . !"

Evidently the little flat had now been reached. Stirn smacked his lips and carried imaginary cakes to his mouth. He distributed brioches to his children. With expressions of pleasure, he drank the coffee and smoked a cigarette.

"It is dark now, Henriette. What is the time?"

"Ten o'clock, Armand, and the children have been in bed some hours."

"Have father and mother gone already?"

"They have gone back to Argenteuil, Armand, and we are all alone with the children."

Stirn walked to the wall of the cell, and motioned as though he were fastening the window.

"What are they doing down there, Henriette? Why are all the people crowding at the windows?"

"They are waiting, as they do every night, for the Zeppelins. The Boches are always talking in their papers about frightening Paris with the Zeppelins, and so they come and it is rather horrible but very beautiful and the next morning one reads in the papers that there have been so or so many casualties . . . women and children . . . and then it is very sad. . . ."

"Little children, Henriette . . . ? Like Marthe and Yvonne . . . ? Let us go and see them asleep."

Stirn tiptoed across the floor of the cell and then bent forward with a smile of happiness on his face, as though he were leaning over the children's beds.

"They are sleeping like little angels, Henriette. Hark, what is that?"

"The purr of the Zeppelin engines."

"They sound directly over our heads, Henriette!"

Stumbling back across the cell, he hurried to the imaginary window at which he had stood a moment before.

"The windows are crowded with people! Listen! They must be directly over our heads!"

"They are over your head, poilu, and that is why you have come on leave from the front to Paris, you who have been mentioned in despatches. . . ."

The madman suddenly broke into a feverish dance. Rushing from side to side of the cell, he gesticulated with his arms and then seemed to crouch over the children's beds, as though hoping to protect them with his body.

"Where have you gone, Henriette? It is not you any more. . . . It is Mabel!"

"Yes, it is I, poilu. I, Mabel Roade, whose child

was drowned in the Atlantic. . . . But you are still Armand Didier, and over the Rue Lafayette, over your little home, over the heads of Marthe and Yvonne, hovers a Zeppelin, a Zeppelin with its devilish bombs, fire and sulphur, Sodom and Gomorrah, poised above the heads of your sleeping children! Your own people . . . your own people. . . . Just as the *Gigantic* sank in the swirl of the ocean, just as the little boat in which I was taking my child to safety, crashed to pieces on the side of the doomed vessel, so now, hovering over your house in Paris, Zeppelins . . . ! There go the bombs, poilu! There are the guns roaring their futile challenge to the invaders. . . . Like a judgment of heaven from the vastness of the sky the whirring of the engines, the deep thud of the falling bombs . . . Zeppelins . . . Zeppelins . . . ! Bombs on the heads of Marthe and Yvonne . . . ! Bombs on the heads of little children, sleeping like angels . . . ! You understand me, poilu?"

Stirn sank on his knees and bowed his head to the floor. Then he looked up, panic-stricken, and gazed terrified at the ceiling of the cell, for in his madness he was gazing at the quiet night sky over Paris. Before him stretched the city, the sea of houses with towers, domes and chimneys, the Trocadero, the Pantheon, the Madeleine and, high on Montmartre, the Sacré Coeur. All the while, cruising over this helpless scene, the huge birds of darkness, with their hideous bombs. . . . The sick man broke into stammering prayer. He pleaded for the innocence of his children, pleaded to the Mother of God. He struggled to his feet and beat himself against the wall of the cell. He was trying to force open the door of the bedroom in which the children slept. The door seemed to stick. He kicked the matted wall with his foot and began crying a confused jumble of words, prayers, quotations, curses.

"Macbeth hath murdered sleep . . . ! Macbeth shall never sleep again . . . ! Are you there, Mabel? Listen to the crashes! Listen to the plaster falling and the house walls cracking and crumbling. . . . Bombs . . . ! bombs in the Rue Lafayette . . . !"

The madman's shriek brought the warder to his feet. Although he knew that he could do nothing, he hurried toward the patient and laid a hand upon his mouth. But his arm was thrown off with a violent gesture and the terrible cry broke out once more.

"The bomb's fallen . . . fallen on my sleeping children . . . ! What is that you have in your hands, Mabel? Why are your hands dripping with blood?"

"I am holding what is left of your children, Armand."

The madman reached, as though he would spue out his very entrails.

"Merely a mass of smoking, pulpy flesh, Mabel. Take it back to the slaughter house from whence you have got it . . . ! Take it back, the flesh and fragments of bones . . . !"

"Your children, poilu, to see whom you hurried back from the front. . . . Atrius's deed was a joke compared to this, poilu. . . . Look for the last time on your children! Look for the last time on Marthe and Yvonne!"

"Cover it up, Mabel! For God's sake, cover it up!"

"Not yet, poilu. You must first look and see where the flesh is burned black with the powder. You must see that the remains of your children are scorched and burned. . . . But the children drowned from the *Gigantic* are white as lilies or dyed green by the seaweed. . . ."

The madman gave a convulsive leap. In his vision

he had been standing by the open window on the Rue Lafayette, behind him the shattered walls of the house, and he thought to hurl himself into the street. As he fell on the floor he lay as though broken in two. Again there was silence.

CHAPTER IV

"**H**OW white everything is, Mabel! My eyes smart and burn, so dazzling is the white!"
"Dazzling perhaps, Prochaska, but not so dazzling as to blind you, for your eyes must watch the tragedy played to its close."

"What is it that shines so dazzlingly white, Mabel?"

"Winter in Poland is always white, Prochaska. For ever and ever, into the endless distance, stretches the unbroken snow."

"Snow . . . to endless distance snow. . . ."

"And under the snow, Prochaska, thousands and thousands of dead men lying, your friends and your enemies, heaps of corpses; little hills of slaughtered humanity, Prochaska, but the white blanket of Polish snow covers them and you cannot see them."

"How did I come here, Mabel?"

"Like all the rest, with your regiment."

"And where is my regiment now?"

"Smashed to pieces, Prochaska, by the Russian guns. . . . Many are dead under the snow, many others are on their way to Siberia, to captivity. The rest . . . !"

"Am I also on my way to Siberia, Mabel?"

"No, Prochaska, you alone are left in Poland. All the others have gone and you, because you lay like a dead man, have been forgotten. The snow came and covered the dead bodies of your comrades and you, left there for dead, have struggled to the surface. Officially you are 'missing.'"

"And now what shall I do?"

"There is nothing to do but wait."

"Look! It is beginning to snow again!"

"It always snows in Poland, Prochaska. How can I tell what will happen to you? Better have remained lying as dead, better not have scrambled out of the white grave which you shared with so many of your friends. Why, oh why, Prochaska, did you seek to rise again from the dead that slept beneath the snow?"

Stirn sat with folded hands. He seemed to be waiting there, abandoned by God and man, his eyes roving hopelessly over the eternal snow-fields.

"Tell me the story of my coming here, Mabel."

"You came with the army of Mackensen. Lodz fell, Petrikow fell. As you advanced Poland became a desert, for the Russians, as they retired, left burning villages, houses as heaps of ashes, dismantled fortresses, empty barns. . . . And you and your fellows advanced, Prochaska, into hunger and misery and death and sickness. . . . For all these things are Poland, Poland into which you must advance, across which you must pursue the Russians. Mid-winter, Prochaska. . . ."

"Mid-winter. . . . And what of me?"

"You have been forgotten. You will die on the spot where you now are."

The warder sat huddled on his chair in the corner of the cell. Perhaps he nodded a little from weariness. His head sank forward, the newspaper slipped from his hands to the floor. With a start he pulled himself together and, yawning, looked at his watch.

"Five and twenty to twelve! Lord how the time crawls!"

The madman began again:

"Wherever I look, Mabel, I see nothing. Not a trough, not a shed, not a village, not a church tower, not even a corpse. Nothing but snow, to all eternity, snow. . . ."

"It is Poland that you see, Prochaska. An un-

broken waste of snow in which you are to die. The Russians retreat before Mackensen, the towns and villages burn, the barns once stocked with grain go up in flame and smoke, the peasants flee before your invading army. But Poland remains, savage, utterly lonely. And abandoned in the midst of the waste one Polish soldier, Prochaska, left to die in the heart of the Polish winter. . . . Forever and always you will stay in the Polish desert, but the army of Mackensen has gone on."

"And my mother, Mabel, and the girl I love . . . ?"

"Your mother will weep, Prochaska. At first she will not be sure whether you are living or dead, for you are given out as missing. At first she will have a little hope, but week by week her hope will grow fainter, month by month it will fade and vanish, until at last your mother will seek comfort in thinking of the thousands, the tens of thousands, the hundreds of thousands, the millions of mothers in Germany and Austria, whose sons have gone, never to return. Like all these mothers, she will bear herself proudly but in her heart she will weep, for a mother never can be consoled for the loss of her child. That is why I was drowned with my child when the *Gigantic* sank, for what use is life to a mother whose child is gone? And now my spirit hovers forever unquiet over the earth, the spirit of outraged motherhood, seeking whom it may devour. That is why, Prochaska, my spirit wanders through Poland and France and Belgium and Serbia and England and Germany and Africa and Asia, and every country of the globe in which human blood is now being poured out, wanders and cries: My child, my child, I will find my child again! Ye have torn him from my breast and I will find him again or my mother's heart will cry and cry until the day of judgment."

"What of the girl I love, Mabel?"

"She will grieve, Prochaska, and for weeks, perhaps for months, she will weep for you, but while mothers sorrow until their death, young girls are rather different and there will come a time when she will turn a favorable eye to that rival of yours, whom once you hated more than any other being in your village, and she will find that he also is a man and that the dead belong to the dead."

"Leave me, Mabel! Let me go! I must run, run until I find her, for that other shall never have her . . . !"

"Run then, Prochaska! By all means, run!"

The madman sprang to his feet, but the next moment he fell full length on the floor.

"I cannot run, Mabel!"

"No, you cannot run, because both your legs are frozen. Have you any feeling in your legs, Prochaska?"

"I cannot feel them at all, Mabel; it seems that I have no legs."

"That is because they are both frozen. There is nothing to do but wait and let the cold creep slowly on, slowly . . . slowly. . . . Let it creep slowly upwards toward the heart, the cold, the relentless bitter cold of snow-bound Poland. . . . Or else, of course . . ."

"Or else what, Mabel?"

"Look!"

"The sun is setting!" he cried. "Setting in an orgy of blood, dropping below the level of the unending

"The sun is setting!" he cried. "Setting in an orgy of blood, dropping below the level of the unending snow."

"A beautiful sunset, Prochaska!"

"Beautiful, indeed, Mabel. A symphony of color! See the purple shadows falling across the snow. . . .

How white the snow looks, streaked with purple shadows and bounded by the crimson sky! White as grave-clothes, white as peace. . . . Peace. . . ."

"Like the peace of the ocean, Prochaska, great and beautiful to those who have overcome it; but as yet you have not overcome Poland's winter. . . ."

"Listen! I hear bells, bells, Mabel, the bells of our village, sounding through the darkness on Christmas eve, ringing in the birth of Christ!"

"They are not the bells of your village, Prochaska. They are the bells of a dying man's fancy."

"It is getting dark, Mabel. . . . But the light of the moon will soon strike above the snowy waste and the light mist will be silver as the waves of the sea."

"Silver as the waves that now rise and fall over the *Gigantic's* victims."

Stirn shook himself as though to throw a heavy burden from his back.

"Why speak of the *Gigantic* here, Mabel, here in Poland when the bells are ringing?"

"I speak of it everywhere and always, because the memory of it never leaves me. Never so long as my spirit wanders restlessly over the world, so long as it seeks atonement . . . everywhere and always. . . ."

With a sob Stirn's head drooped on his breast. After a moment's crouching silence he raised his eyes, and, with a look of eager happiness, murmured:

"The bells . . . ! The bells . . . ! They are the bells of a sledge, Mabel, coming to save me, coming to take me from the hideous loneliness of this desert to civilization once again, for my legs are frozen and I cannot move."

"Perhaps they are the bells of a sledge, the silver bells of rescue. . . . Perhaps . . ."

"They are coming nearer, Mabel. Cling-a-ling."

. . . Like the bells of Christmas . . . ! Mother's bells, Mabel . . . ! Christ will soon be born . . . !"

"Christmas has come in Germany, come and gone, and they thought of you and sent you presents, presents from your mother, presents from your lover, but you could not be found, for you had gone far into Poland and the parcels lay, among thousands of other parcels, buried in a dusty corner, and waiting in vain to bring joy to the eyes of sons over whose graves the eyes of many mothers have wept and will weep scalding tears. . . . Parcels for dead men, Prochaska, parcels for the missing, parcels for the mortally wounded, for the drowned, for the mad; poor forsaken parcels, my gifts and your mother's gifts, useless, unwanted, pledges of love waiting year in, year out in vain. . . . The love that sent them wanders over the blood-stained earth, tirelessly, eternally and finds no resting-place, no welcome, no joy. . . ."

"I cannot hear the bells any more, Mabel! The sledge must have passed by."

"It was no sledge, Prochaska. Not for years and years will any sledge traverse this corpse-strewn desert of Poland."

"What were the bells then, Mabel? I heard bells distinctly. Tell me what they were!"

As though listening eagerly, Stirn sat with his eyes fixed on the matted wall.

"Why do you not speak, Mabel? Tell me what the bells were! But now I hear something that is not the ringing of bells. I hear a distant roar."

"The bitter cold of the steppe, the bitter cold of the snow fields, the relentless ice of Poland, the chill of death, all these creep round the heart and sound in the ears, now like bells, now like a distant roar. Those were the sounds you heard, Prochaska, the sweet ringing of bells, a thunder as of the sea, a roar of wind

. . . ! That was what you heard, Prochaska . . . death . . . death . . . death, riding the snow-storm and, during bitter days and icy nights, traversing the wastes of Poland and sharing with his boon companion, starvation, whatever wretched life may still remain to be plucked and devoured. . . . But besides death and starvation there are others. . . ."

"Others, Mabel? What others, ringing over Poland in the company of death and starvation? For pity's sake, tell me what others! . . . For pity's sake!"

The sick man's voice was full of a terrible pleading, but to the warder it was merely the babbling of a lunatic, the voice of one preaching in a desert to whom rocks and sand-hills do not reply. And still Stirn begged piteously:

"For pity's sake, tell me who are the others . . .?"

"Listen! Do you hear nothing?"

"No."

"Do you see nothing?"

"No."

"Nothing in the shimmer of the moonlight? Nothing under the uncertain sparkle of the stars, that powder the sky of this Polish winter? Are you sure that you see nothing? . . ."

"Nothing, Mabel, nothing!"

"Then listen! Are you sure you cannot hear it, the long drawn wail, the howling carried on the quiet of the night, the uncanny cry of hunger, rising and falling, sounding over the ice and snow from the distant forests? Do you not hear the cry for food, the cry of the night robbers of Russia and Poland who feed on the bodies of the dead and the wounded and the missing . . . ? The missing, Prochaska, and the wounded who cannot drag themselves away . . . ! Can you not see over there in the shadows of the wood-pile . . . there, where the black shadow of the birch trees falls

across the snow . . . ? Can you not see them, one, two . . . three . . . ? almost a pack . . . look some more . . . and more . . . snuffing the air with their muzzles raised to heaven, lusting after the scent of blood and corpses on which to feed. . . . The wolves . . . ! The wolves . . . ! Do you not hear them? Can you not see them, Prochaska?"

The madman sprang to his feet with a desperate shriek. Hoffmann started and was about to run to the patient, when he saw that Stirn had once more sunk down into his corner. Convinced in his raving that both legs were frozen and that he was not able to move, he lay where he was motionless, trembling, with staring eyes, making fumbling gestures with his arms as though in self-defense.

"The wolves . . . ! The wolves! The wolves are coming . . . ! For God's sake, keep away . . . away . . . ! I am still alive . . . ! God in heaven, keep them away . . . !"

It was all that Hoffmann could do to maintain control of his nerves. The patient's stuttering turned to a sobbing cry and then rose gradually into a howl, half-human, half-animal. For a moment the warder stood uncertain whether to ring for help or to stand by patiently and see what happened, waiting for the fit to pass away. Already the madman felt the warm nuzzling of the wolves against his trembling body, already he felt the first sharp bite of their teeth, already their foul breath made him stifle and choke. At once in agony and hideously conscious, he knew that he was being eaten alive. At last he lay silent and without movement. With a cloth the warder wiped the sweat from the patient's forehead, who now lay utterly exhausted, and, for a space at any rate, at peace.

CHAPTER V

THE vultures, the vultures! See how the vultures circle above my head!"

With this cry of terror the madman started once more out of apathy.

Hoffmann shook his head. In all his varied experience he had never had a patient of this kind. Damn the war! To think that this man, the only war-victim the warder had yet supervised, was nevertheless infinitely the most trying patient of a life-time! He shuddered a little as Stirn broke out once more:

"Mabel! Drive them away, the vultures, that circle ceaselessly above my head!"

"They are waiting to pick at the shreds of flesh which will still cling to your skeleton, even after you are dead of hunger."

"Who am I? Why should the vultures wait for me to die?"

"You are Casparian Zorab, the schoolmaster at Geben, driven with the rest of your people at the order of the Turks into the desert, hounded on by the Kurds and Arab bands."

"Where am I now?"

"You are in Dar el Zor, that veritable hell-mouth at the entry of the Arabian desert, that chasm behind Aleppo in which you and your people will die of heat and drought and starvation."

A sudden cry of pain broke from the madman.

"Those of us who have come so far . . . ! For now I remember what happened on the way!"

"It was a long journey, Casparian."

"For thirty-two days, Mabel, we were driven by the

Kurds through the burning sunshine, until they handed us over to the tender mercies of the Bedouins—the Bedouins are even more cruel than the Kurds, Mabel. . . .”

“And life was sweet, at home in Geben?”

“Sweet, indeed, until they came. . . . Until the Turks came with orders from Constantinople that we were to be driven out of Geben, driven from our homes . . . ! How horribly clear is the memory of that day! We were all marshaled in the street in front of our houses, I and my wife Rachel and my daughter Lydia and my son Reuben and all my friends with their wives and children . . . every soul in Geben.”

“Every soul, Casparian?”

“In so far as they had not already been murdered, Mabel.”

“Murdered!”

“There were many, of whom it was said that they had tried to evade military service. . . five thousand of them. . . . We were disarmed, Mabel, driven together like sheep; from our number the strong men and youths were chosen and taken off to jail. . . .”

“You are sure they went to jail, Casparian?”

A terrible laugh from the madman caused the warder to look up. At once revolted and fascinated, Hoffmann sat and listened.

“It was a lie, of course, Mabel. They gave out that the men were going to prison but the Turkish police were all Kurds in disguise and they took the five thousand down into the valley that lies just beyond the village and . . .”

“And?”

“. . . Merely another massacre. . . .”

“The whole five thousand!”

“The whole five thousand. They waded in blood.

. . . It is called the valley of the red rocks now, Mabel, that little valley just beyond Geben."

"And what did they do to you?"

Helplessly, as though looking despairingly for assistance, the madman's eye roved horror-glazed over the padded wall. At last a single word came from his lips.

"Bastinado!"

"And with your feet thus mangled, Casparian, you set out through the burning sunshine for the Arabian desert?"

"For the Arabian desert, Mabel, where the vultures are waiting; for the barren plateau of rock near Dar el Zor. . . . Do you hear the Euphrates rushing over there, Mabel? No longer can one drink the waters of the Euphrates. . . . In the desert man dies of thirst, Mabel. As for food, there is the grass. . . . For days and days I have eaten grass. . . . I cannot go farther, I cannot even rise from the ground. The others over there are quarreling over the grains which they can sometimes pick from the droppings of the dromedaries and the Arab horses . . . there is nothing else to eat, Mabel, and the waters of the Euphrates are far away. Even if they were at hand they are no longer yellow, they are red. . . . Red with the blood of my murdered kinsmen studded with corpses. . . . The bodies of those thousands who have fallen on the banks of the Euphrates were not cremated, Mabel. They lay, those bodies—Christian bodies, or Mohammedan bodies, who knows?—thousand upon thousand mutilated and infecting the air of Mesopotamia, for there was no one to burn them."

"The corpses stink to heaven, Casparian; their smell is a pestilence throughout the world; they cry for vengeance—vengeance on those who do such deeds, vengeance on those who call themselves the mur-

derers' friends! They reek and reek and are not burned. . . ."

"Sometimes they are thrown into the river, Mabel, and are washed down stream to the Persian Gulf or remain rotting in the marshes among the hills, until the last shred of skin perishes from their bones. They were little more than skin and bone, Mabel, after having been driven for days and weeks from their homes toward the desert—little more than skeletons by the time a blow on the head with a club put an end to their misery."

"But surely there were others, Casparian, who did not die thus."

"Indeed yes, Mabel. Many thousands were taken by the Turks and Kurds alive onto barges and drowned in the river like young kittens in a sack."

"And in this way a nation of Christians has gone down to destruction, Casparian; slaughtered by Moslems in the 'Holy War'! You are all alone, Casparian!"

"Alone, Mabel. . . . And yet one of a thousand living skeletons tearing at the grass with claw-like hands, gasping for water, flogged with whips, beaten with sticks, hounded from place to place, whenever there seemed any possibility of relief . . . alone in this pitiful crowd!"

"And for what do you hope now, Casparian? Your lips are moving! For what do you pray?"

"I hope for nothing now, Mabel, and I pray for death for myself and for these my kinsfolk."

With a cry of unutterable pain the madman dropped full length upon the floor and scratched feverishly at the flock which he had already plucked from the mattresses, thrusting it into his mouth as though it were the wiry grass fringing the rocks at the mouth of the Arabian desert.

"The sun burns like fire, Casparian, in Dar el Zor. Where have you left your wife?"

"She died by the roadside, by the roadside between Aleppo and Dar el Zor—died before my very eyes."

"How did she die?"

"She died travelling! The Bedouins would not leave her in Aleppo but drove her onward with their whips! Mother of sorrows! There at the edge of the rock, travelling in the blazing sun, they killed her. . . . Before my very eyes, Mabel. . . . And I left them, her and the dead child, pitched by the side of the road as though they were rubbish. . . . And I was driven further . . ."

"And your daughter Lydia, Casparian. Was she beautiful?"

"Too much so, Mabel. . . ."

"How old was she?"

"Fifteen . . . with blue eyes and long fair hair. . . ."

"Fifteen years old. . . . Fair haired. . . . What a prize for a Turk . . .!"

"Silence!"

"I will be silent if you wish, Casparian, but I can guess what happened. She was sold."

A broken cry of misery came from the madman's lips.

"Stripped naked before my eyes, Mabel, naked as a piece of beef in the market-place at Aleppo. . . . Sold to an old Turk for five piastres, my daughter Lydia . . .! Her breasts and thighs prodded by every haggler that passed, until finally—again before my eyes—she was packed off into the old Harem at Aleppo, crying upon me to kill her! And I could not kill her because I lay bound hand and foot on a cart with my feet mangled by the bastinado, while all the time she cried and cried and cried: Kill me, father, for God's sake, kill me . . .! But she was too beautiful and her hour had not yet come!"

"You are right, Casparian, her hour had not yet come. The cup of misery is not yet full, the Holy War is not yet glutted with horror and disaster; the Turks in Constantinople with their noble friends shout for more . . . 'In Allah's name!' . . . What has become of your son Reuben, your only son?"

"Him they took at Geben, for he was seventeen and strong and could bear arms. They said he was to go and fight, but all the same he was among the five thousand taken into the little valley that lies beyond Geben, the five thousand who were massacred."

"And how did he die?"

"They tried to force him to become a Moslem, but when he refused they simply cut him to pieces with their curved knives and he bled to death after terrible torture. My only son . . . bled to death in the Holy War!"

"And so you lie here, Casparian! Look around you! You must see everything and hear everything until the time of your expiation is fulfilled! There are thousands lying here with you, worn out, parched with thirst, gnawed with hunger, without shelter from the terrible sun of Arabia, and at night without clothing to cover their bodies from the bitter wind of the desert. . . . You and your people, Casparian, are naked, hungry, thirsty and without shelter, for the Kurds and the Arabs seized everything they could find in your houses in Geben and sold it. And then all the riff-raff released from the prisons in order to make room for your kinsmen came and plundered and burned your houses to the ground. The police were bandits, the officials criminals from the lowest stews of the Turkish cities and yet these men drove you into the desert and sat in judgment upon you until they handed you over to the robber Bedouins of the desert and fulfilled the sentence passed upon you that you should be

driven from Aleppo to the marsh of Sultanieh and thence to Dar el Zor. . . . And all the while Christendom looked on helpless."

"Of all abominations the worst . . . !"

"Abomination is abomination, and there is nothing worse in what you suffer than was suffered when the *Gigantic* sank . . . !"

"The *Gigantic*!" cried the madman. "Was that as terrible as this, Mabel?"

"How can I tell, Casparian?"

"It cannot have been as terrible. . . . Endless is the pain of the blazing desert sun, minutes become years and hours tens of years, and days centuries. . . . Endlessly, endlessly and still death does not come. . . ."

"The Atlantic took me and my child in a minute of time to its bosom."

"What is crying over there, Mabel?"

"The children of your race, Casparian. The little children who are here dying of hunger in the desert of Dar el Zor. . . . They are crying for their mothers, for food, for the milk and sustenance that in the happy days at home was always theirs. . . . But here is nothing, nothing but the wiry grass of the steppe, which they force between their teeth, nothing but the horse-dung from which they seek to pick the grains of corn, nothing, nothing, nothing . . . and they cry for the goats' milk and the cows' milk . . . ! But the Kurds have already driven your flocks from their stalls, have already broken the hives and dispersed the bees from which you got your honey. . . . So the little children lie unburied in the sunshine and the vultures hover over them; hover over the waste from which rises in a horrible chorus the cries of mothers and of fathers who have seen their children die before their eyes. . . ."

"The sun-heat is growing less, Mabel."

"Evening is falling, Casparian. See how the sun dies behind the rocks in an orgy of red."

"Red . . . red like the waters of the Euphrates!"

"The little children creep into the shelter of the goatskin tents and the endless day succeeds the endless night, while in the distance the jackals whine hungrily. . . . And to-morrow a few more will be dead and the next day a few more and so on, day after day, until the desert is satisfied. For your people are like the dogs of Constantinople, the dogs that Abdul Hamid shipped in barges to an island in the Sea of Marmora and abandoned there till, one after another, they fought and were eaten and their cries—cries of starvation and despair—rang through the darkness, through the richest quarters of Stamboul. . . . To-day, Casparian, from one end of the world to another there will ring the cry of the desert of Dar el Zor, in which a homeless and abandoned people turn finally to eating each other until the last dies of starvation!"

"Prometheus! I am Prometheus!"

Stirn had stretched out his arms and stood in the attitude of one crucified.

"The vultures, Mabel, the vultures!" he cried. "I am chained to the rocks by the power of Zeus who has sent the vultures . . .!"

He plucked feverishly with his fingers at the front of the straight waistcoat, as though seeking to bare his breast to the onslaught of the birds of prey. . . .

And once more:

"Prometheus! Prometheus!"

And he stood motionless as a Greek statue.

CHAPTER VI

HE stood poised in this attitude for so long that Hoffmann gazed at him wondering. It seemed incredible that a human being should have the strength to stand motionless in this position minute after minute. Of a sudden the words began again to pour from his lips in an unbroken stream. On his forehead stood beads of sweat. But his voice went on and on:

"Look into the future!"

"I am looking into the future, Mabel!"

"Take this uniform, put it on, and bear yourself like a god!"

The madman relaxed his rigid limbs suddenly. Once more he made the familiar motion as though he were dressing himself.

"Follow me!"

"Where are you leading me, Mabel?"

"To Saint Gilles, Leutnant von Schwarzenstein. To the prison of Saint Gilles in Brussels where tonight your duty lies. There is to be an execution!"

"Horrible!"

Stirn sought once again to cover his eyes with his hands.

"It is useless to hide your eyes, Leutnant, for you will see everything. . . . You are in command of the firing party. . . . The laws of war have spoken and by the oath that you have sworn to your sovereign you must obey!"

"They are long and dark, the passages, Mabel!"

"The passages of the prison of Saint Gilles, Leut-

nant, in which for ten weeks she has been awaiting her sentence."

"She? Who?"

"A woman whom they have condemned to death, Leutnant, a woman that spent her life in doing good."

"A woman? Her life in doing good, Mabel?"

"She was a nurse, Leutnant, and in charge of a hospital at Brussels. . . . She tended wounded soldiers—German and Belgian and English and French—asking no questions, caring nothing for their nationality, knowing only that they were sick and in need of care."

"Then why?"

"The laws of war have spoken. . . . The military code consists of dead letters and unfeeling paper and paper and ink have no heart!"

"Who condemned her?"

"Your court-martial, Leutnant, and technically with justice . . . justice, according to paper and ink . . .!"

"Why?"

"She gave money and help out of pity to those who wished to flee across the frontier. And according to the military code, anyone who helps the enemy to escape incurs the death penalty. That is what the military code says, the code that is written on paper, the code that is printed in all the fairness of black and white."

"When was sentence passed?"

"Nine hours ago."

"And when will it be carried out?"

"To-night at two o'clock in the prison of Saint Gilles . . . quickly and secretly . . . and you are commanding the shooting party . . ."

"A woman, who did good . . .!"

"The laws of war make no distinction between man and woman, Leutnant; the laws of war recognize no mitigating circumstance; they are paper and ink, ink

and paper, and like you, they do not think. For you are a leutnant and your duty is not to think but to obey."

The madman drew himself rigidly to attention. After a moment's pause he began to speak again:

"Where am I?"

"This is the door of her cell."

"See! She kneels over there before her crucifix! Who is that with her, Mabel?"

"An English clergyman."

"Her back is turned to us, Mabel, and I can see nothing of her but her back and her beautiful white neck."

"She is not to be beheaded, Leutnant; she is only to be shot. . . . Shot by the platoon which you command."

"She is speaking to the clergyman, Mabel. . . . She turns her head. . . . Her face seems lit up and noble. . . ."

"Can you understand what she says?"

"Every word."

"And what the priest says?"

"Again every word."

"Then repeat it to me. . . ."

Stirn seemed to be listening intently. He stood with his head slightly forward, as though drinking in this imaginary conversation.

"The clergyman is asking her whether she is able to appear before the throne of God with a pure heart. . . . She replies: 'With a pure heart, quietly and reverently, for I believe in God and the life everlasting.'"

"And what does the clergyman ask her now?"

"Whether she believes; and she replies proudly: I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary,

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

As he spoke the last words a shudder went through the madman's body as though he had been lashed with a whip.

"She is speaking again, Mabel."

"What is she saying, Leutnant?"

"I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting, 'Amen. . . . Life everlasting. . . . Life everlasting. . . . Life everlasting. . . ."

The words sounded like a thrice-repeated judgment from the lips of the sick man.

"She is speaking again to the clergyman; 'I have no fear nor shrinking; I have seen death so often that it is not strange or fearful to me. I thank God for this ten weeks' quiet before the end. This time of rest has been a great mercy, for life has always been hurried and full of difficulty. But this I would say, standing as I do in view of God and eternity, I realize that patriotism is not enough. God requires something further. . . . I must have no hatred or bitterness toward anyone, for He said and commanded: Love your enemies!'"

"So those are her words, Leutnant?"

"Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness toward anyone. . . ."

After a moment's pause, Stirn spoke again:

"On her knees with the priest she prays: 'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.' . . . And now the clergyman hands her the consecrated wafer: This is my body. . . . And now the cup: This is my blood. . . . Now he pronounces the Benediction: 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace, now and for evermore. . . .'

"Is she not still on her knees, Leutnant? Is she not now singing?"

"Yes, Mabel, she is singing:

'I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if thou abide with me.'

"And now?"

"She is giving to the clergyman parting messages for relations and friends in London and Brussels. . . . He is saying good-bye and she replies smiling: 'We shall meet again!' . . . The clergyman goes away. . . ."

"It is your turn now, Leutnant. . . . Squad, halt!"

Uncannily the sick man pulled himself together and stood upright, as though at attention. Then he spoke again:

"Sergeant Harnisch and three men . . . ! Is it far to go, Mabel?"

"A few steps through the courtyard to the grave; the torches will light you; here is the German military chaplain who will accompany you."

"He is speaking to her, Mabel. . . . He is asking whether she has any last wish to express. . . . And

she replies that she has said everything to the minister of her own church. . . . He takes her by the arm. . . . March!"

"Remember the laws of war, Leutnant. . . ."

Once more the madman sprang to attention.

"Ten steps through the courtyard, Leutnant, by the light of the torches. . . ."

Stirn staggered toward the door, but even in his unsteady walk there was something purposeful, almost rigid, some old strange memory of the days when drilled to automatic discipline, he moved as became an officer.

"Blindfold the condemned, sergeant!"

The speaker's hands made foolish motions in the air, as though he were tying a bandage over the victim's eyes.

"In the Emperor's name! In the Emperor's—What is that shining round her head, Mabel?"

"Merely the flicker of the torches, Leutnant."

"No . . . shining like a crown of light . . . not the reflection of the torches, Mabel. . . . The crown of life everlasting. . . ."

"Remember the laws of war, Leutnant!"

"Squad, 'shun!"

"Read the sentence."

"I am reading it, Mabel."

Stirn motioned as though he were unfolding a paper. A flow of meaningless words came to his lips. Gradually the uneasy babble checked and died.

"The condemned has fainted, Herr Leutnant. Shall we revive her?"

"No!"

"Shall we raise her up?"

"No."

"Shall we bind her?"

"No."

"Then what . . . ?"

"Fire!"

"We cannot aim. . . ."

"Fire!"

"Herr Leutnant, it is impossible . . . !"

"Fire, I say! Damn you, don't you hear the order . . . ?"

"Impossible. . . . They will not shoot, Herr Leutnant."

"Mabel, they refuse to shoot! They are crying!"

"Yes, they are crying, Leutnant. Courage! Remember the laws of war! Do your duty!"

"My duty, Mabel?"

"Take your loaded revolver, Leutnant——"

"I cannot . . . !"

"You must, Leutnant! Take your revolver, walk up to the condemned and make an end. . . . She is only a woman and she has fainted. . . . You are a man. . . . Act like one. . . . Set the pistol at her temple, fire and make an end!"

"Spare me, Mabel! I cannot . . . !"

"You must, Leutnant! I order it!"

The madman's lips were flecked with foam. He staggered like a drunken man, gesticulating with his arm in the air. It was as though he raised a pistol in his hand, raised it and let it fall, his hand moving indecisively, uncontrollably. . . . It was as though, before his fixed and staring eyes, the crouched, unconscious figure swam in mist.

"Go closer, Leutnant. Hold it against her temple . . . !"

Stirn stepped forward unsteadily.

"Now bend down!"

He leaned forward as though over a body lying on the floor. "And now fire . . . !"

He turned his head away so that his horror-stricken

face glared hideously over his shoulder at the padded wall. Then, unmistakably, the finger of his right hand crooked and moved. . . . And the madman, like a puppet of which the string has suddenly been cut, collapsed in a heap upon the floor.

CHAPTER VII

HOFFMANN looked at the time. He was beginning to get uneasy. For five minutes the patient had not moved. However, it was a quarter past twelve and the director would soon be back. The warder sat listening anxiously and at last Gollmer's voice became audible in the corridor. He was accompanied by somebody whose tones were familiar to Hoffmann. As the door opened and the two men crossed the threshold, he recognized the director's companion to be von Winterstein, professor of psychiatry at the neighboring university. Von Winterstein would come frequently to the asylum to collect material for his lectures.

"Good evening, Hoffmann! You know Professor von Winterstein?"

"Good evening, sir!"

"How is the patient?"

The visitors stood and looked at the sick man who lay, with his face to the wall, crouched in the corner of the cell.

"Apathy . . . momentary apathy," murmured Gollmer. "He has not been like that the whole time since I left?"

"Indeed not, sir. He has been talking and crying and screaming, but now it appears that he is worn out."

"What has he been talking about, Hoffmann?"

"I couldn't make head or tail of it, sir, but it appeared . . ."

"It appeared . . . ?"

"Well, sir . . . as though he were carrying on a conversation with someone else."

"Ah, yes! That frequently happens. . . . All right, Hoffmann, you can go. Tell Rieth to come on duty."

"Good night, gentlemen."

"Good night, Hoffmann."

Gollmer motioned his companion to the chair on which the warder had been sitting. He himself paced slowly up and down the cell, lost in thought.

"It's a pity," he said at last. "I should like you to have heard him, for the case seems to be a highly typical one and yet at the same time to have very exceptional features. Indeed, in some respects, I never remember having a patient that puzzled me more."

"Who is he?" asked von Winterstein.

"Captain Stirn, who commanded the submarine that sunk the *Gigantic*. He was brought here in the last stage of raving lunacy. As you know, the war has filled all the asylums. . . . Madness caused by horror is the most usual. . . . The patients count up to many thousands. . . . But this is quite a different business. You see, in comparison with those who have gone through all the horrors of battle-field and trench, this man underwent nothing very unusual. . . ."

"Nothing unusual! Surely . . ."

"Of course he sank a liner, but what I meant was that he can have seen very little of it himself . . . merely a picture through the periscope. . . ."

"Is there any evidence of hereditary tendency to lunacy?"

"I have made every possible enquiry, but the father and mother are both healthy (they are still alive) and all the sisters are healthy. No sign of alcoholism or tuberculosis or syphilis. Otherwise, of course, one would look for some latent mania or paranoia brought to the surface by a sudden shock . . . or progressive

paralysis is not unusual about that age. He is thirty-eight. As I said, I can find no evidence of venereal infection, but, of course, one never knows. . . ."

"No one ever knows. What are the particulars regarding the actual outbreak of mania?"

"Very few. He threatened his crew with a revolver in the cabin of the submarine, after they had taken on board a woman's body and he had been going through the valuables found on the corpse."

"Is it not possible that this woman had some connection . . .?"

"That would surely be an astonishing coincidence, that out of the thousand women drowned on the *Gigantic* the one with whom Stirn had some connection should thus be taken on board the submarine!"

"The thousand other women! . . ." The Professor continued: "You spoke of valuables, Gollmer; what sort of things were they?"

"I understand there were a few rings, a watch, a diary of some kind . . ."

"A diary? That ought to throw some light on the matter."

"I looked at the book and it is merely an account by a mother of her child's life—nothing more than that."

"Nothing more than that. . . . Did not the warder say that the sick man carried on a conversation with someone?"

"I believe he did. What of it?"

"Is it not just possible that Stirn imagined himself to be in conversation with this dead woman?"

"That never occurred to me."

"I am only putting the theory forward very tentatively. . . ."

"In that case, your theory that the drowned woman

had previously played a part in the patient's life would be supported."

"Yes. . . . Do you happen to remember the name of the writer of the diary?"

"She was an American woman called Mabel Roade . . ."

As the words left the director's lips, Stirn moved suddenly and, turning his haggard face to the two doctors, said:

"Was that you calling again, Mabel?"

"There you see . . ." murmured von Winterstein to Gollmer.

The director nodded and tried to draw the patient out. "How are you feeling, Captain?" he asked.

The madman held his head tilted backward, as though he were speaking with the stars of heaven.

"You are telling me I am a king, Mabel."

"A typical case of megalomania," whispered the professor.

But Gollmer was not listening. He was watching the strange contortions of the patient who, turning toward the visitors with a strange dry smile, said:

"I have your majesty's permission?"

Gollmer nudged his companion.

"You are quite right, my dear colleague," he said.

Then, turning to Stirn, he asked:

"You are a king?"

The madman replied:

"I am incarnate. Some spirit has transformed me."

"Mabel Roade . . .?" asked the professor.

"Yes, Mabel Roade," replied the madman.

Hereafter he paid no attention to the two doctors. Sitting upright on the mattress, he gesticulated violently with both arms, reproducing the movements of a juggler at a circus who is throwing a number of

brightly colored balls toward the ceiling. Minute after minute, without the least sign of exhaustion, the rhythmic motion continued.

"What is your majesty doing?" asked the director.

"I am obeying the spirit which moves me," was the answer.

"Mabel's spirit?"

"Mabel's spirit."

"And what are her orders?"

"That I should play catch-ball. And therefore I play catch-ball with my crown and with the lives of men, for that is why I have been sent."

"Sent, your majesty?"

"Yes, that is why God's grace has descended upon me. The many colored balls with which I play, red and blue and yellow and green, rise and fall evenly and beautifully. Do you not see them?"

"Indeed," replied the director, "they rise and fall beautifully, your majesty." Now both he and the professor raised their eyes toward the ceiling.

"I shall win, with my balls," went on Stirn. "For I am filled with the certainty of victory and where there is will there is victory. My wish is law . . . and I play catch-ball. My spirit tells me that my wish is law."

"Mabel's spirit, your majesty?"

"No, no! My own spirit. See how the balls rise and fall, up and down, up and down, and never one of them falls to the ground. They all return to my hands, forced by the law of gravitation."

"The law of gravitation, your majesty?"

"Certainly. Am I not the middle point of the world? The balls must fly higher, higher, much higher. . . . But they always return to my hands because I will it so."

The monotonous movements went on tirelessly;

sweat stood on the madman's forehead but he did not seem to notice it.

"My might knows no bounds. My might cannot be limited. I am I. Each of these balls is a nation, each of these balls is a country, each of these balls is an army . . . and I play with them. I play with them because it pleases me and because the spirit moves me to do so. There was a time, a few years ago, when I did not play with these balls, but kept them in a drawer, near my throne. And I would go and look at them from time to time but I never took them out and played with them because I knew . . . because I did not trust myself, because I was afraid. . . ."

"What was your majesty afraid of?"

"I was afraid that one of my beautiful balls would fall into the mud and be lost or broken; and so I would shut the drawer up again out of fear, in order that my balls might be safe."

"And now?"

"My spirit leaves me no rest, my royal spirit will not leave me in peace. And I began to play, first with one ball, then with two, then with three, then with ten, then with fifteen, finally with all the balls I had in my drawer . . . and they are going splendidly! See how they fly through the air! See how they return always to my hands! It requires courage to play at catch-ball, courage and self-confidence, and I have self-confidence."

The director turned away and took no further notice of the madman whose gestures became more and more agitated and who, standing upright now, began running and jumping from one side of the cell to the other, furiously determined that neither the red, nor the yellow, nor the blue, nor the green ball should fall into the mud and be spoiled.

"What do you make of the case?" the director asked von Winterstein.

"I do not see anything very abnormal," replied the other. "Classical megalomania. . . . It is quite common for a patient to think himself a king playing with countries and peoples and armies as though they were balls."

"Then what's your conclusion?"

"I think it is a typical case of progressive paralysis. It seems to be very important that we should find out if possible whether there is any trace of hereditary influence or of venereal infection. Would it not be possible to go through every detail of the patient's past history, finding out where he spent his leaves, what cures he has undergone? It should not be difficult, seeing that he is an officer. . . . And it is worth while, for the case is a very interesting one."

Gollmer nodded.

"Yes, I think there is little doubt that you are right. Megalomania in such an extreme form must have some antecedent cause. I will make a point of going into the patient's previous history most carefully. The cause of science may benefit very materially from our researches."

Gradually the sick man's arms began to tire. They moved more and more slowly and finally stopped altogether. He sank down again on to the floor and crouched in the corner, his face turned to the wall.

The door opened and Rieth, the new warder, came in.

"If anything unusual occurs, Rieth, telephone me at once at my house. The receiver stands just by my bed. And now good night."

"Good night, sir."

"Good night," said the professor.

"Good night, sir."

The doctors left the cell and Rieth remained alone with the patient.

CHAPTER VII

"I AM flying! See, I am flying!"

"That is natural enough, for you are a lieutenant in the Flying Corps, stationed behind the trenches at Bapaume. You are to-day making your 134th flight, Leutnant Reinhard."

Rieth felt uncomfortable. He had brought a book with him to wile away the time of his watch and now struggled to concentrate his attention on what he was reading. He had not Hoffmann's long experience of this work and the behavior of the patient filled him at once with vague alarm and curiosity.

"You are only twenty-five years old, the only son of your parents. It seemed as though you would complete your studies and live a life of happiness and comfort, loving and beloved. But fate left you no rest and here you are behind the trenches at Bapaume, 12,000 feet above the ground, poised over the battlefield where your fellow men suffer and fight and bleed, alone with your pilot. . . . Is it not wonderful to be isolated . . .?"

"What am I to think of, Mabel?"

"Think of the past, Leutnant Reinhard, and of the future. Think of what you have left behind in your beautiful home. Think of your mother—when did you last write to her?"

"Yesterday, Mabel, for I write to her nearly every day."

"And had you any premonition when you wrote?"

"What sort of a premonition, Mabel?"

"A sense of gloom, a sense of impending sorrow. . . ."

"No."

"What did you write about?"

"I wrote, as always, about my life here, so far as I am allowed to do so, and, as always, I wrote cheerfully."

"You are very young, Leutnant Reinhard, and therefore it is natural for you to be care-free and cheerful among all the suffering and wounds and blood and tears which wander up and down the trenches at Ba-paume. It is your right to be cheerful, the right of youth. What are you thinking of?"

"Of my work, Mabel; of my task of locating hostile artillery, of my duty to report what I have observed. . . . Sometimes, sometimes I think of my mother . . ."

A smile of happiness transformed the ghastly face of the madman into something almost beautiful. . . . Rieth, noticing the smile, felt a sudden spasm of pity shake his heart. Fascinated, he forgot his book and listened.

" . . . of my mother, Mabel, for she is still young and beautiful and clever, and slim as a gazelle. . . . She has no gray hairs and in the good times before the war she would be taken often for my sister, so young is she, with her clear blue eyes . . . ! When the war is over, when I get my long leave, I shall rush to her and tell her all that happened and she will be proud of me!"

"And you are her only son?"

"She would often grumble that her other children were girls."

"When were you last home on leave?"

"Barely a fortnight ago, Mabel, at Easter time, as the trees were beginning to bud and the first larks were rising from the fields. We were together first at home in the great town and then in the wood near by where my father built a country house and gave it to my

mother. We all used to live there, my mother and my father and my sisters and I."

"Where is your father now, Leutnant?"

"On active service, Mabel. He is a major. . . . Not a regular major, but when the Fatherland called he answered, and so my mother remains alone in the country house near the great city, with my sisters."

"Tell me about your sisters."

"Three are grown up. The fourth is still a little girl, and I have always been more of an uncle to her than a brother. I remember before she was born how anxious I was for my mother, for I was old enough by then not to believe any longer the story about the stork."

"How proud they must be of you!"

"I hope so, Mabel. What rejoicing there was when I got the Iron Cross!"

"So you have the Iron Cross?"

"I got it for my 100th flight, and telegraphed immediately to my mother, who replied by a telegram full of joy."

"Tell me about your last leave, Leutnant Reinhard."

"At Easter? My father was not at home, so that I had my mother all to myself. We would go out in the evening and walk in the forest, hand in hand like a pair of lovers, while all around the buds were beginning to break."

"And what did you talk about?"

"I told her all about my flights and our officers' mess in the château, and my friends, and the regulations . . . but all the time, at the bottom of our hearts, we were both of us thinking of the parting that was bound to come. We never mentioned this parting. We kept our heads high and chattered of other things, because my father will not tolerate any weakness. . . . He says that times like these are only for

the strong. And so we carried ourselves as bravely as possible, although neither I nor my mother is really like that, Mabel; although we are both tender-hearted and emotional and could easily have wept at the thought of parting and at the terrible things which are happening in these days. But my father had forbidden us to be weak and so we were strong."

"Did you not weep at all?"

"Outwardly, not at all, Mabel; but inwardly our hearts wept tears much bitterer, much more despairing, than those which the world can see. I shall never forget the last moment at the station (for she came to see me off) when we pressed hands, dry-eyed, thinking all the time of the walks we had taken in the forest and of the blessed week that was gone. But we merely shook hands through the window of the compartment and I came back to the château behind the trenches of Bapaume."

"Did you see none of your old friends and comrades, when you went home on leave?"

"I saw something much more fundamental, Mabel; I, who had hitherto only seen the future, saw the past. This war makes us very much older than our years, for it kills joy and hope, on which youth subsists. . . . There, at home, in the quiet and comfort, I began to find my youth again, that sense of youth which never entirely vanishes. My room, my books, the butterfly collection which my uncle gave me—all these and other relics from childhood, brought to me terribly clearly a sense of what I had lost. I realized the joy of small things, of the thousand little details which belong to intimate memory. The old cupboard full of books in my sister's room; the silver paper medals which the girls made for me once when we were playing soldiers; the framed catechism presented to me by my grandfather when I was confirmed; all these and many

other fragments from the past. How the past bleeds, Mabel, from the hundred wounds inflicted on my mother and on myself by the battle which now rages in every land! Is there no one to say: Enough! There can never be anyone to bring back the years of happiness and beauty and youth, to give back to those of us who are under thirty the blessed years that war has stolen from us. May the curse of God be on those who have found it in their hearts to commit the crime of slaying our youth with their red hands, their red and aged hands! My mother and I weep in silence when we press hands, weep secret tears which my father may not see and of which he may not know, because cruel age has stolen the joy of youth, because from mothers the world over children who belong only to them have been stolen, and thrown, like frivolous counters, on the green gambling table. Because of the death of thousands and hundreds of thousands of young men, we weep in silence and in secret before the throne of God. My mother's hair grows white before its time and her clear blue eyes are dulled with tears because her son has been stolen from her. I am the mouthpiece of the young men of every land and of every people, sacrificed to the avarice of age, to the ambition of the great, to the lust for power of old men and old women whose days are already numbered! I stand for youth that smiled but that now, forced unwillingly into misery and death, weeps bitterly in its heart."

"And did you not think these things before your last leave, before your present flight?"

"Never before, Mabel."

"Strange. . . ."

"Why do you say strange, Mabel. . . .?"

"You are right to be afraid, Leutnant Reinhard, thinking and speaking of your mother and your sisters

and your vanished youth! You are right, on this your 134th flight, to be afraid! Do you see up there toward the sun?"

"The sun is so dazzling, Mabel."

"Look eagerly and keenly, for your eyes are still young . . . ! Do you not see the dark point?"

"It is moving!"

"Yes, it is moving and directly over your head! Is the machine-gun ready, Leutnant? Is your revolver ready?"

"The black spot is getting larger. . . . Coming nearer!"

"An English aeroplane . . . !"

"An English aeroplane."

"Think now of your mother, your home and your youth and your early hopes and your father and your home in the wood and your sisters. . . . Do all these memories telescope together in the mirror of your memory?"

"They all telescope together, Mabel, the memories of many years combined into the small picture of a few seconds—twenty years of happiness and peace now a flash, a lightning flash . . . every detail of those years stands out with a horrible clearness in my mind. My mother, the school, the house, the first holidays at home, the mountains, the little girl I used to know . . . everything within the space of two or three seconds, my whole life in the space of two or three seconds . . . ! And now I see the figure of my mother and her hair is white and her blue eyes are dull with weeping . . . ! I cannot bear those eyes, Mabel!"

"Look out, Leutnant! The enemy 'plane is close upon you! See how it sinks, ever nearer, ever nearer! It is no use to fire, for the enemy is directly above your head. Dart away, swoop to the right, plunge suddenly, your only hope is in lightning speed!"

"Mother! Mother! Mother!"

"Too late! You have been hit! Your engine is smashed to pieces!"

"Hold me, Mabel! I am falling . . . falling into bottomless depths. . . . The air roars in my ears! I can see nothing more! I can hear only the whistling of the air! Down . . . down . . .!"

"There is something below you, Leutnant, the hard earth upon which in a minute you will crash, a mere shapeless lump."

"The wind and the storm and the rushing air! . . . Down . . . down . . .! Crashing to meet the ground to lie there, a mere formless lump."

Rieth's horrified eyes were fixed on the madman. He could not understand the meaning of Stirn's excited movements. He appeared to be falling, falling rapidly . . . then suddenly it was all over. Seeing the patient lying in a motionless heap on the floor, Rieth walked toward him with the idea of raising him up. But Stirn whispered:

"A shapeless lump, merely a shattered lump of flesh and splintered bone. . . ."

CHAPTER IX

THE madman staggered to his feet. Jumping up, Rieth ran to the patient and supported him. For a moment it seemed as though he acknowledged the warder's assistance.

"That is much better. . . . Thank you. . . . I feel curiously weak."

But Rieth soon realized that the words were addressed, not to him, but to the phantom figure created by Stirn's madness. He returned to his chair and left the sick man to his own devices.

"My hair is quite white, Mabel, and my skin wrinkled. My teeth are mostly gone and my hands tremble."

"You are now an old man. Take your stick and hobble after me. Do you see where we are going?"

"I see cross after cross, headstone after headstone, grave after grave. We are in a churchyard."

"Do you recognize it?"

"Indeed I do, Mabel. I recognize it for the churchyard in which I buried my dear wife."

"Twenty-five years . . . and you were not a young man when you married. . . ."

"No, Mabel. I was already forty-six when I married."

"Do you remember what happened so long ago as that?"

"For a year I was happy and then there came a terrible evening, when I nearly killed myself."

"What happened on that evening?"

"I came to the hospital and they told me that the child was alive but . . ."

Stirn's voice broke and for the moment he sobbed bitterly. Then he completed his sentence:

"That Marie was dead."

"And when you knew that your wife was dead, you wished to follow her?"

"I wished to follow her, Mabel."

"The revolver lay by your side on your desk?"

"On my desk . . . loaded and ready, for I knew that Marie would have a difficult and dangerous time and I had made up my mind what to do, should the news from the hospital be bad."

"And then at the last moment you had not the courage?"

"Not entirely that, Mabel. I had been shown the child by the nurse and he was so small and helpless and, to my eyes, so pitifully like his dead mother, that I began to feel it was my duty to live for his sake."

"And do you think you did wisely?"

"I thought so at the time, Mabel, and my son became the pride of my life and the star of my declining years. Never did he cause me anything but joy and in his company I relived the years of my own youth. I learned with him once again to read and write. He shared his little troubles with me and his great troubles. . . . I was more a friend than a father. There was no dark corner of his heart hidden from me, Mabel, for he knew that he had given me back my youth and that I was his friend."

"And then . . . ?"

"Then I began to work, Mabel, to work with a fierce industry and with a constant eye on the profits I was making, for I was working for him. He must be happy and I would work to make him happy. Like a thousand fathers I became almost a fanatic, toiling early and late so that my son might have a better life than I had had myself."

"And so he grew up?"

"He grew up healthy and cheerful and happy, the image of his mother, whose outward features and inward characteristics I recognized more clearly in him every day. We laughed and joked and drank together and . . ."

"This is the result. . . ."

"Who are all those people there, Mabel?"

"They are your friends and acquaintances, come to mourn with you; a goodly number, for you are much respected, old man, envied and respected by your fellow citizens. You have won decorations and official honors and wealth and the path of your only son had been made smooth by your efforts."

"And all the soldiers over there in uniform, Mabel. What do they want?"

"They are there to fire the salute over the grave, old man."

"And the officer with the sash?"

"He is there to do the last honor to the dead, to the comrade who fell facing the enemy. They will all come and shake your hand, old man, and one after another they will tell you that, in these great times, to die for one's country is the noblest fortune that can befall a man."

"I have often read that, Mabel, but in my heart I have never believed it."

"Nevertheless you must lie with your mouth, however true may be the feelings of your heart. You must shake a hundred hands, murmuring words of thanks, while your soul cries out in agony that anyone can have the insolence to say such things to you. You will smile in a friendly way, old man, smile bravely through your tears, for all those distinguished people have come here for your sake, old man, two colonels and a general—see the gold stripes on his trousers and

the golden epaulettes, see the red-lined cloak and the shining star on his collar—they have all come to do you honor, old man, honor . . . !”

“Be silent! My heart bleeds. . . .”

“However much your heart may bleed, your mouth must speak fair words and your lips must smile.”

“And the man in the cassock?”

“He will make a dignified little speech; for his sermon he will find ringing words, words. . . . He will talk of the noble youth who was true to death and who has won the crown of life. Dead, tragic, ridiculous words will be spoken by the man in the cassock.”

“What are they carrying over there, Mabel?”

“A coffin, a coffin containing your only son.”

“What is that rushing noise, Mabel?”

“Listen carefully, old man, and you will hear the voice of the poet murmuring through the rushing of the wind . . . brief, truncated sentences, whimpering like a child crying for its mother. The procession is falling into place. And you, leaning on your stick, supported by the minister, must totter behind the coffin, right to the edge of the grave. . . . And all the time that sound of rushing wind, like a distant organ, like the gale in the tree-tops. . . .”

“The band is striking up the funeral march. But all their drums and all their trumpets, cannot drown the noise of the rushing wind.”

“They seek to drown it, old man, but they cannot do so; their drums and their trumpets are powerless against such a sound.”

“We are standing by the grave. . . . The words of the man in black strive against the rushing sound but are swept away. The last chorus and the salute fired over the grave are dull as the beating of fists upon the floor. And all the time it roars and roars and I can hear it, but no one else . . . I seem now to hear verses!”

"Perhaps the verses of a German poet who foretold in his poetry what has come to pass. For they say that poets are prophets. . . ."

"Trembling on his crutch and weeping bitterly,
Who follows, with tragic, stricken eyes,
Who follows, tottering, the silent coffin?
It seems the young man murmurs: 'Father!'
Fearful eyes look pityingly; and the old man,
His long healed wounds reopened by his grief,
Creeps white-haired to the open grave.
'Father!' The whisper breathes above the grave.
'My son!' The father's aching heart replies.
O, sorrowing father, he that once was gay,
That once, a sweet and golden dream, shed light
Upon thy age, lies now ice-cold—
Cold, cold, ice cold, swathed in the clothes of death!"

"Those are the words of one of your poets, old man, a man who knew nothing, who could have known nothing of the *Gigantic*!"

"The *Gigantic*!"

The name of terror rang through the cell. Rieth shuddered as he heard the name of the sunken ship echoing horribly, interminably, from the padded wall of the prison. For some minutes Stirn was silent. Then suddenly he began again:

"Where am I now, Mabel? The churchyard has disappeared . . . They have filled in the grave and all the people who shook me by the hand have gone, and the man in the cassock who walked by my side behind the coffin. They are all gone!"

"You are alone, old man, alone for the rest of your life, alone in your home which already totters over your head . . . alone . . . alone . . .!"

The madman wandered to the side of the cell and motioned as though he were taking things up, one after another, fingering them and putting them down again. In a broken voice he began muttering to himself:

"Here I wait alone, day after day, week after week, month after month, waiting for him to come back to me to support my age, to lighten my darkness and my loneliness; but he never comes. How I used to long for his letters which, when they came, I would raise furtively to my lips, as though they were letters from my beloved! How I would think out plans for him, hoping, hoping, that he would come through the war in safety! How I prayed for him, prayed that at least this one life might be spared, that at least this one horror might be prevented!"

"Thousands of old men of every race and in every country are praying the same prayer, old man, but the cup is set to their lips and they must drink. On board the *Gigantic* we prayed, but still the cup was set to our lips. . . ."

The madman's movements changed again. He appeared to be turning a key in a lock.

"I am going to discard everything now, which once I accumulated for his sake, which is now worthless."

"Where are you now?"

"I am sitting alone at my desk, Mabel, at the desk where I sat not a week ago writing to him, although he was already dead."

"I see a flicker on the walls, old man."

"The fire leaps in the chimney, Mabel. It is spring outside but in my heart it is winter. That is why I have lit the fire."

"Is that the only reason?"

"No . . . !"

Stirn made jerking motions with his arms. It seemed that one after another he was throwing objects from him, tossing them all in the same direction, as though hurling ballast overboard.

"It is burning, Mabel! Everything which was once holy to me is burning! But now it is all rubbish,

worthless rubbish! My Iron Cross that I won in 1870 is now a little heap of molten metal. The Star which the Prince presented to me for my services to trade is now a little heap of ashes."

"The flames leap higher, old man! What is blazing now so brightly?"

"Paper, Mabel, paper for which to-day the world is fighting, paper that governments have issued by millions and millions, paper that is counted for money, that I once counted for money . . . ! See how brightly it blazes! See how the flames dart and quiver!"

"What is that laughter, old man?"

"The laughter of all the devils of hell, Mabel, the laughter of betrayers betrayed, the laughter of fools who believed in this rubbish—Iron Crosses, Stars, paper money—who bled and died to win . . . molten iron . . . a heap of ashes . . . charred remnants of burned paper . . . ! See how the paper is sucked up the chimney into the outer air and there tossed about, blown hither and thither until nothing remains. . . . Nothing remains, Mabel, nothing, nothing, nothing. . . . Ha! ha! ha! . . . The laughter of the devils, the laughter of a million beggars, the crazy laughter of a million widows and learned men, of cripples and paralytics, of the downcast and the miserable and the oppressed. For all that remain are the dancing fragments of charred paper, sucked up the chimney, driven to the ends of the world by every passing breeze, lost in the darkness of the night . . . Ha! ha! ha! . . ."

Down the corridors of the asylum, breaking the midnight silence, the idiot laughter of the madman rang and echoed. And as the sound was thrown from the padded door to the padded walls and through the door and through the walls into the passages and the other cells, the madman danced and danced and danced. . . .

CHAPTER X

THE dance over, the madman collapsed motionless upon the floor. He began to rise slowly once again and after a while he knelt, his hands clasped above his head. Rieth stared at him bewildered.

"How is it written?"

"What do you mean, Mabel?"

"Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. So is it written."

"I can see nothing, Mabel, my eyes are blinded with tears."

"Can you remember nothing?"

"I had three sons, Mabel. But my loins are withered and the spring of my breast is dried up. I can never bear another son."

"What was the name of your eldest son?"

"I called him 'Strength.'"

"And what became of him?"

"They drowned him in the sea."

"Like the *Gigantic*! Tell me the story of your eldest son, Heart of the World."

"He was the lovely fruit of my youth's first agony, Mabel, and great was my pride in him. When he was born the eyes of my sisters were hot with jealousy, but for this I cared nothing when they laid the newborn child at my breast. He grew up in freedom and beauty and suppleness like a young animal. He was my pride. And when I saw the nascent strength in his young body, I felt myself greater and richer and happier than my sisters, to whom no such son had

been given. He ran more quickly than his companions, wrestling with them he overcame them; he was stronger than they and braver; he feared nothing. Wherefore his father and I called him 'Strength.' Then came the war. . . . Laughing and singing he left me, with autumn leaves in his hair and roses in his hand. He mocked at danger, for in everything he had conquered. He was caught, like all our people, in the delirium of the moment. I believed that he could triumph in anything and therefore I let him go joyfully, for I also was caught in the universal madness."

"Until . . .?"

"Until he was drowned."

"And the news reached you . . .?"

"As I sat with my sisters."

"Did they comfort you?"

"At that time I needed no comfort, Mabel, for I was still proud. Or rather I thought myself proud, proud and cheerful in adversity. They used to call that pride 'the spirit of our time' and, like Job, I said: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!' In this spirit I sacrificed my eldest son, as thousands of my sisters in every country were sacrificing their sons."

"And then they took away your second son?"

"And then they took away my second son, as they had taken away my first. He was a weakling, but they took him nevertheless. . . . And he froze to death in Poland. He was the child of my sorrow and my tears, Mabel, for in the suffering with which I bore him I had not the comfort of first pride. All the time he was growing within me I felt weak and ill and I hid myself from the eyes of my sisters. . . . He was born before his time and only his mother's care and the skill of the doctor kept him alive. Bit by bit, breath by breath, we won him from death; wherefore he be-

came very dear to me and I called him 'Wisdom.' Just as his elder brother was strong, so was he wise. Even as a tiny child the quickness of his mind delighted me, as had previously the valor and iron will of his brother charmed my watching eyes. He did not fight with his companions and conquer them, but by his intelligence he left them far behind. His weapons were understanding and wise words, and gradually the power of his spirit strengthened his body and before he was thirty he had become a great teacher of youth."

"And then came the war?"

"Then came the war and he left me gravely and with resignation."

"Without autumn leaves and roses?"

"Without autumn leaves or roses. The hour of his departure is ever a shadow on my soul, Mabel. It was in the evening and the lamp burned on the table and he said: We must have no illusions, mother; we must look facts in the face. I shall die and I know it."

"And you replied . . . ?"

"I threw my arms about his neck and prayed him with tears not to leave me. I told him that when his brother died my consolation in the night silences was that he, 'Wisdom,' would remain with me, but he replied: 'Do not cry, mother. I shall die and we must make up our minds to it.' So he left me. . . . Some weeks later, I was standing in the kitchen, preparing a meal for my youngest son, when there came to the door a young girl with a telegram. . . ."

"And the telegram . . . ?"

"I do not know. . . . I must have fainted. . . . Weeks after I came to myself in a sick bed and saw, standing before me, my third and youngest son. . . ."

"And he . . . ?"

"He was in uniform!"

"And did you let him go?"

"How could I help it? The law makes no exception, Mabel—not even for the youngest of my three sons. He went like a beast to the sacrifice. He was so young—much younger than both his brothers—barely twenty . . . ! He was, as it were, a legacy from his father, for my husband died before he was born. He was the son of my grief, the child of my husband's death. . . . And I called him 'Goodness.' "

"Why did you call him 'Goodness'?"

"He was not strong like the eldest, Mabel, nor wise like the second, but his soul was like a spring flower opening in the May sunshine. I was his sunshine, Mabel, and I loved him as though he were a flower. . . . I called him 'Goodness,' that holiest of all names; for it is written that no man is good save God alone—and he was my God."

"And what became of him?"

"They murdered this youth in Flanders."

"And you?"

"I bore the news without a tear, without a movement, without a murmur. It was as though, like Niobe, I had been turned into stone. . . . From that day to this, Mabel, my heart is of stone. I am turned to ice or, like the woman who looked back at Sodom and Gomorrah, turned into a pillar of salt."

The madman stood absolutely motionless, minute after minute, like a statue. His very muscles seemed to have been robbed of life. The warder went to him and tried to make his position easier, tried to lay him down upon the floor. But the spirit of his raving held him rigid and Rieth's efforts were unavailing. Suddenly, however, his limbs seemed to get free and he cried:

"I see, I see! Where am I, Mabel?"

"You are on the mountain of knowledge, Heart of the World."

"I see millions and millions . . . at my feet I see humanity crucified, humanity stained with blood, trodden in the dust, mocked and scorned . . . ! I see an ocean, a black ocean of mothers, raising their arms to the blue and pitiless sky and crying: Enough . . . ! Enough . . . ! Enough . . . !"

"Many of them are dragging great buckets, Heart of the World. See how heavy they are . . . !"

"They are heavy with tears, Mabel, with tears of outraged motherhood. . . . They are coming!"

"Yes, slowly they are climbing toward you up the mountain of knowledge, in order to pour out before the throne of God the salt water of their tears, in order to cry their misery to the ears of the All Just. And you must drink all these tears, you must hear this endless complaining. Awake . . . Heart of the World! Awake and cry out before the face of God and before His throne!"

"How they cry, Mabel! 'We will have no more! Enough! We will have no more! The life that you have stolen belonged to us and we will have no more. The springs of life are dry in us, our breasts are wasting! We will have no more.' So cry the millions and millions of mothers, so cry the crucified of humanity!"

"See how they press toward you up the slopes of the hill of knowledge! Do you not see in every bosom the hilt of a dagger, a dagger plunged into their hearts? Stand on the topmost peak of the mountain, Heart of the World, and speak to the millions of sorrowing mothers!"

"What shall I say?"

"Say what I tell you, for I that speak to you am the spirit of Mabel Roade, the spirit of motherhood,

whose babe was torn from her breast and drowned like a helpless kitten in the eternal waves of the Atlantic. Until the end of all the endless worlds I wander restless through time and space, crying, crying to the throne of God! Against the spirit of this time I cry out and you shall cry with me, Heart of the World! See now, I am naked, without a shred to cover me, and I stand with my misery on the peak of the mountain of knowledge before the world and before the throne of God! Shameless and naked, I expose to the world the wounds of motherhood and cry, and cry . . . ! I cry to you, Heart of the World, that stand on the hill of knowledge and before the throne: 'Give me back the fruit of my body, that I bore and suckled to life and not to death! Give me back my child, Heart of the World, and cry with me! "

"From the peak of the mountain of knowledge, Mabel, I will cry with you before the throne of God and from world to world, from everlasting to everlasting, to the pitiless blue of heaven! Hear how the millions and millions of mothers are crying, crying to God to give them back the children that they bore and suckled to life and not to death, the beings that they brought into the world for joy, and not to be pitched into the yawning graves of Poland, France and Flanders!"

"But God does not listen, Heart of the World!"

"No, Mabel, God does not listen, because God is dead . . . ! God is dead!"

The voice of the madman echoed through the cell as though he were pronouncing the final sentence of damnation. And he stood there, his arms raised above his head, in his tragic face a light as of transfiguration, on his white lips the awful doom of the eternal judge.

CHAPTER XI

HAD Rieth possessed the necessary experience, he would have grasped, from the phase of comparative well-being into which Stirn's madness was now entering, that euthanasia had set in and that the shadow of death was already falling across the patient's path.

"You are now reincarnate as Isaiah the son of Amos," said the madman solemnly.

As he spoke he appeared to grow in stature, his arms reaching ever nearer to the ceiling. Standing on his toes, he remained motionless like a bronze figure, but his eyes, a moment ago dull with pain, now flamed with a strange ecstasy; not the ecstasy of fever but that of an almost unearthly fervor. And once more, proudly and with dignity, he said:

"You are reincarnate as Isaiah the son of Amos! O prophet in Israel, look upon the soul of this time! Bend down and look into the bowels of hell and tell me what you see!"

Stirn drooped his head, then his body, until he crouched as a man crouches at the edge of a chasm, his hands gripping the floor tightly to prevent himself from pitching forward. His eyes, as they peered downward, seemed to grow larger and larger in their attempt to solve the riddle of hell.

"What do you see, Isaiah?"

"I see Chaos."

"Describe Chaos to me!"

"I can see nothing but darkness and cloud and mist and lightnings and hear nothing but a deep and rolling thunder, rising from the very depths of the earth."

"Can you distinguish, can you recognize in this Chaos the soul of the age?"

"My eyes are slowly getting accustomed to the darkness. It seems that a great fire is sending a pillar of flame through the clouds and parting them. . . . Dimly but ever more clearly I can see, gleaming in the depths, a purple throne of carbuncle. . . ."

"And on this throne . . .?"

"A woman, Mabel, a giant woman, naked and beautiful; but her features are hard and in her black eyes shines the wild flame of hatred, her breasts torn by the claws of lasciviousness and her lusts cannot be appeased."

"That is she, Isaiah! That is the soul of this time! Ask her who she is!"

"I have asked her, Mabel, and she replies: 'Seven are the days of the week and seven is the number of my names, as seven is the number of the serpents which surround my head. Each day I have a different name and should my domination and the domination of this war know no end in the eternal course of history, then comes the Lamb, and the victorious one and my enemy, of whom you have been told. On the first day my name is Lust; on the second, Avarice; on the third, Craving for Power; on the fourth, Envy; on the fifth, Ambition; on the sixth, Falsehood; and on the seventh, Stubborn Pride. For ever and ever, year after year, I live this seven-day life in an unending circle, until it is fulfilled as is written: *Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle; your carriages were heavy laden, they are a burden to the weary beast; they stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden; but themselves are gone into captivity.*'"

"What souls are these, O woman?"

"The souls of them who have served and still serve

me, who work in my name, the souls of kings and princes, of statesmen and diplomatists, of ministers and wise men, of generals and scientists, souls that I have enslaved, souls that I drag in chains at the chariot wheels of this time. . . . See! I sit on the golden throne and rule over Babel and my name is Lust! Countries and oceans are my servants and as a reward they dress themselves in purple and fine linen, stolen from the depths of the ocean and from the silkworms of China. To their service I have oppressed nation after nation, so that my courtiers may glitter with rubies, sapphires, diamonds and pearls, that my courtiers may command the shells of the sea, the sands of the rivers, the cliffs of the Himalayas. Mile after mile I have conquered with the power of steam and with the miracle of electricity, so that my courtiers can fill their stomachs with the delicacies of the Indies, with the fruits that grow in the sunny tropics. My power has made it possible for them to smear their bodies with ointments and oils, to scent their hair with rose-water and their garments with musk. They were idle and dirty, but stronger than their idleness or their filth was their avarice! Avarice, my glittering second name, taught my servants to gather gold, so to order their beliefs and words that ever more dead gold fell into their hands. They learned to print paper and to call it money, to pile up their dividends! Thanks to red gold, I possess them body and soul, for they sold me everything that I asked for—love and honor and friendship and plighted word and solemn promise. Not a single one withstood me, and I could say with safety that if I found ten just men in Sodom I would spare her, for I know well that I should never find even ten. . . . Then I enter upon the third day of my weekly cycle and my craving for power has thrown thousands and millions into chains. All the peoples

of the world fell on their knees and trembled before my power. My poison I dropped into the hearts of their kings and rulers, whispering in their ears: You shall have power over other nations, for your nation is the nation of the future, the chosen people of whom it is written: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

"And they believed me. Then began my fourth day and I called myself Envy and became quite yellow, like the bars of gold which I had shown to them. And through my eyes they saw lands and seas which they had not yet conquered, fields of wealth over which they did not yet rule, opportunities of becoming richer and richer and richer. . . . The final span of my weekly life rolled triumphantly to its fulfilment. As a prop to Ambition-I used Falsehood; my falsehood I supported with Stubborn Pride. For ever I am supreme! Who is there to hurl me from my throne, who, among the miserable creatures that I have spurred with lust, whose hearts I have locked in avarice; whose ears I have deafened with the thunderous desire for power, whose eyes I have dazzled with the mirror of envy, whose minds I have bound to the chariot of ambition, whose lips I have smeared with the paint of lies, whose necks I have stiffened with the pride of stubbornness—who, among all these, shall rise against me and against my throne?"

"Destroy her, Isaiah!"

"I? How shall I destroy her?"

"With the lightning of your mouth and the sword of your tongue; with the whip of prophecy. Speak to her!"

"Come, daughter of Babel, come down into the dust!"

"My throne is firm. I shall not come down!"

"Daughter of the Chaldeans, your throne is overcome!"

"Foolish man! From everlasting to everlasting I shall rule!"

"Once more, Isaiah, speak to her once more! Hurl her from her throne!"

"Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin, daughter of Babylon! Sit on the ground (there is no throne), O daughter of the Chaldeans! For thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones and grind meal; Uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, Uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, Yea, thy shame shall be seen; I will take vengeance, And I will not meet thee as a man.

"As for our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, The Holy One of Israel. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For thou shalt no more be called The Lady of kingdoms.

"I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, And given them into thine hand; Thou didst show them no mercy, Upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever; So that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, Neither didst remember the latter end of it.

"Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly; That sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, Neither shall I know the loss of children. But these two things shall come to thee in a moment; in one day, The loss of children and widowhood; They shall come upon thee in their perfection; For the multitude of thy sorceries, And for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

"For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, Thou hast said, None seeth me; Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; And thou hast said in thine heart I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee. Thou shalt not know from whence it riseth; And mischief shall fall upon thee, Thou shalt not be able to put it off; And desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, Which thou shalt not know.

"Stand, now, with thine enchantments, And with the multitude of thy sorceries. Wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; If so be thou shalt be able to profit, If so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels; Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, Stand up, and save thee. From these things that shall come upon thee.

"Behold, they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them; They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame; There shall not be a coal to warm at, Nor fire, to sit before it.

"Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast labored, Even thy merchants, from thy youth; They shall wander every one to his quarter, None shall save thee."

"What is the woman doing now, Isaiah?"

"She rises and trembles! But crowds and crowds are gathering to help her and she laughs mockingly at my words!"

"Millions and millions of armed men obey me and any one that does not obey me is shot! Millions are dying for me and when they are dead I stamp upon the ground and fresh millions are born! Day and night a thousand brains are working for me, thinking out plans, creating an atmosphere, all in my service!"

"In vain! In vain! Your pride and the deaths of these men are all in vain."

"I have ships!"

"They are blockaded!"

"I have cruisers!"

"They are sunk!"

"I have submarines!"

"They are ambushed and destroyed!"

"I have Zeppelins!"

"They shiver into atoms!"

"I have poisonous gases!"

"They are conquered by masks!"

"I have mortars!"

"They are surpassed!"

"I have machine guns!"

"They are worn out!"

"I have wire entanglements, in which my enemies are caught!"

"They have shears to cut your wire!"

"I have . . . I have . . . Tell them, slaves, what else I have!"

"To whom is the woman speaking?"

"To her astrologers. One of them, who wears a long black garment adorned with the moon and the sun and the stars, rubs his hands, bows to left and right and smiles. . . . And now he speaks, speaks like a book. . . . And the woman, red with anger, turns away from him, for there are thousands standing before her throne crying for the blood of the astrologer. . . . She turns to a mighty man who stands, like Samson, with a jaw-bone of an ass in his hand, and calls, calls. . . . And multitude after multitude rise from the ground, army after army, and the woman claps her hands and laughs for joy."

"And now?"

"A sorcerer kneels before the throne. She raises him up and kisses him. He performs miracles, changing water into wine and milk, scobs into wheat, offal

into sausage, paper into gold—roll after roll of paper, millions and millions of miles of paper turned by the woman's sorcerer into gold! And the multitude cries: This paper is as good as gold and we have confidence in you, O sorcerer! And a hundred thousand arms bearing shears are stretched toward the throne of the woman and seek to cut pieces off this roll of paper."

"And the woman?"

"Again she claps her hands and she applauds the sorcerer—but suddenly a great voice thunders from above: I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other God but me!"

"Does the woman turn pale?"

"Scarlet, rather, with anger! Rising from her throne she shakes her fist toward the sky and cries: I will destroy you! And the astrologer smiles, and the mighty man stamps with his foot on the ground, and the sorcerer, the sweat pouring from his face, turns ever more paper into gold. . . . And the armies dance like madmen round the naked body of the woman and around her throne, crying: Long life to the woman! Hail to the sorcerer to whom is kingdom and power and glory for ever and ever!"

"And is there not one that doubts?"

"Not one!"

"Is there not one that wavers?"

"Not one! They gaze upon the woman's breasts and upon her spreading thighs and all believe and not one doubts, not one of the millions and millions, thronging about the throne of carbuncle!"

"Then it is for you to change, Isaiah! Take these new weapons and slay the woman! Slay the soul of this time!"

CHAPTER XII

“**D**AVID, son of Jesse, you that slew Goliath the giant, take your weapons and slay the woman!”

“How shall I slay her, Mabel?”

“Climb down into the chasm, and destroy her!”

The sick man's movements became positively grotesque. So agitated was he, that the warder made a vain attempt to soothe him. With the strength of madness, Stirn threw off his powerful jailor's restraining hands. The latter, comforting himself with the reflection that the matted walls and floors would preserve the patient from any actual harm, gave up the attempt and returned to his chair in the corner.

The madman made movements as though he were climbing, carefully lowering one hand after another down the wall, and at the same time feeling his way downwards with his feet.

“The chasm goes ever deeper, Mabel!”

“Thousands and thousands of feet, David, until the very centre of the earth is reached.”

“My hands are bleeding, Mabel, and the rock is slippery!”

“Be bold and hold firm, for the blood which streams from your hands clings to the rock and bears you up.”

“Deeper, deeper. . . . I am stifling, Mabel!”

“You are breathing the poisonous gases invented by the woman's helpers. Here is a mask.”

The madman motioned as though he were fixing something with both hands in front of his face.

“Have you reached the bottom yet, David?”

"Not yet, Mabel. Pillars of fire blaze round the throne of carbuncle and block my way. . . . And now I see a dog with three heads, that breathes pitch and sulphur."

"Strike the dog with your spear, David, and go without fear through the furnace, for your garment is made of asbestos!"

"With my spear I have pierced the dog through the heart, Mabel, with my sword I have smitten off his three heads, but three new heads have grown in their place!"

"Trample him under foot, David, crush his head like the head of a serpent, and walk through the fire!"

"I have trodden his head under my foot, but he has bitten me in the heel. My heel bleeds . . .!"

"Press on through the fire, David! Can you see the woman?"

"No, Mabel. The throne is empty and the woman with her astrologers and her mighty men and her sorcerers has vanished."

"What is that upon the step to the throne, David?"

"A seven-headed serpent, Mabel, which writhes its heads and darts poisoned fangs from its open jaws."

"Slay the serpent, David, for it is the woman creeping in the disguise of avarice! Cut off the serpent's heads!"

"Every one of its seven heads have I cut off, Mabel, but new heads have grown in their place!"

"Tread it down with your foot; and do not shrink if once again you are wounded in the heel, for it is written that such should come to pass."

"I have done so, Mabel, but now there is sitting a lion upon the throne!"

"The woman has changed herself into the image of ambition! Draw your sword from its sheath and strike off the head of her ambition!"

"She has seven heads, Mabel."

"Strike off all seven!"

Seven times, with the sweat standing upon his forehead, the madman made with his arm a curious striking motion. Then he spoke again:

"The lion will not die, and changes before my very eyes into a dragon, from whose mouth comes a burning stream of lava!"

"Your garment is of asbestos, David, and you must press forward through the lava stream. What color is the dragon and where is it crouching?"

"Sulphur yellow, Mabel, and it crouches near the throne on a heap of gold and jewels. Its breath streams out like lava from a volcano!"

"The woman's envy will allow no one to approach her treasure, but you, David, carry the sling of God, so speak to the dragon as once you spoke to Goliath the Philistine!"

"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied!"

"Now sling your stone!"

Stirn raised his right arm, bent backwards to gain more impetus for the throw, and then brought his arm rapidly forward as, in imagination, the missile sped upon its way.

"Have you smitten him?"

"I have smitten him, Mabel, and the dragon bleeds from a wound in his forehead. He roars with pain and spits fire over his heap of treasure."

"Press on through the lava, David, and slay the dragon with your sword, as formerly you slew Goliath among the Philistines!"

"I cannot, Mabel. Wings have grown into the dragon's back and he mounts into the air, circling

above the throne like an eagle. He is not a dragon, Mabel, but a griffin!"

"The woman in the guise fitted to her craving for power! Seize the quiver from your back, set an arrow to the bow and with one shot bring the evil thing tumbling to the ground!"

With set face and staring eyes, the madman shot his arrow. As the warder sat gazing in horror, Stirn suddenly broke into hideous laughter that rang through the passages of the asylum. In a voice of wild triumph, he cried:

"I have hit him, Mabel! The griffin falls!"

"Is he dead, David?"

"His body is dead, Mabel, but from it rises a poisonous green mist."

"Lies . . . lies . . . lies . . .! Slay the lies, tread them under your feet, crush them into nothing!"

"I cannot, Mabel, for only the Lamb that bears the sins of the earth can be a slayer of falsehood, and the Lamb does not come, Mabel—not yet, not yet . . ."

"So my spirit wanders in vain, for the Lamb does not come! The mist of lies still floats above the body of the griffin, David?"

"Already it changes, Mabel, and I see a beast with huge legs and a huge stomach and a long neck like a swan . . .! Now the beast takes on the guise of a horse and I see a noble horse, Mabel, set in the depth of the chasm. By the horse, which is rigid and motionless as though moulded out of bronze, stands a giant, who is casting a spell upon it, in order to tame it. The horse is dazed and foolish and falls under the spell. The horse is bewitched into stubborn pride and now refuses to move at the command of the giant, stamping with its hoofs, shaking its mane, lashing its tail and breathing fire from its nostrils. In vain does

the giant attempt to bridle it, the horse in its stubborn pride prevents him."

"Slay the horse! draw the knife I gave you and plunge it in the horse's heart."

"I cannot, Mabel! For now the stubbornness of the horse becomes pitiful and it seems as though, if it could throw off the bonds that bind it, it would be a noble beast. But every moment it becomes more subject to the spell, every moment it plunges more wildly about the depths of the chasm. Where is the man to bridle this horse, where is the spirit to subdue its stubbornness?"

"Is there no one to break the spell?"

"There is one can do so, Mabel, and that is Chronos—Time. Chronos, who ate his own children, Chronos, and not the giant, will subdue the horse . . .! But already the horse has disappeared into the shadows of the chasm and, looking after it, I see the future, immense, in the likeness of the beast!"

"Some one speaks to you, David. Who speaks to you in the chasm?"

"One of the seven angels, Mabel, that hold the vials full of the wrath of God, until the word is given for the vials to be poured out over the earth."

"What does the angel say, David?"

"The angel says: Come hither and I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. . . . The very chasm vanishes, Mabel, and I see the desert of Sinai and in the distance the mountains, and in the desert the woman, sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman is arrayed in purple and scarlet color and decked with gold and

precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness."

"And what is written on the woman's forehead, David?"

"The mystery, Mabel; Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abomination of the earth."

"How does the woman look, David?"

"She is drunk with all the blood that she has swallowed."

"The angel speaks with you further, David. What does he say?"

"He says: 'The woman which thou seest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth.'"

"And what will become of the woman that reigneth over the kings of the earth? Do you now read the future, David?"

"I see another angel come down from heaven, crying mightily with a strong voice: Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication; and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies."

"Has the angel finished speaking?"

"He has finished, Mabel, but I hear the voice of another angel saying: Come out of her, my people; that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto the heavens, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works; in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her. For she saith in her heart,

I sit a queen, and am no widow, and I shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire. For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning; standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying: Alas, Alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come."

The madman's voice rang with prophetic solemnity. After a moment's silence he spoke again:

"Has the second angel ceased to speak, David?"

"The second angel has ceased, Mabel, but now I see a great angel which takes up a stone like a great millstone, and casts it into the sea, saying: Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

As he said the last words the sick man's voice grew faint, flickered like a dying candle-flame and died in a ghostly whisper. He lay motionless on the floor and, as Rieth hurried over to him, seemed at first to be dead. But he was still breathing and, in a few moments, tottered once more to his feet.

CHAPTER XIII

“**I** SEE the sea, Mabel.”

“The Atlantic, in which the *Gigantic* sank?”

“No, Mabel, but a calm, blue, southern sea, wide and magnificent.”

“You are on the isle of Patmos.”

“I have a long white beard, Mabel, and my hair is like snow. Who am I?”

“You are he that saw the red beast and the woman clothed in purple and scarlet color. You are John the Evangelist.”

“I see a long road behind me, Mabel.”

“The years of your age are 103, John, but your heart is pure.”

“My heart is pure because I was the disciple that He loved.”

“You are happy, in order that the promise made to you may be fulfilled that, as one who is pure of heart, you should see God. What do you see?”

“I see seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs are white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes are as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he hath in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance is as the sun shineth in his strength.”

“Bow down to the dust before him!”

"I fall before him like a dead man."

"For a few moments Stirn lay motionless upon the floor. Then he began once more:

"And he lays his right hand upon me, saying unto me: 'Fear not, I am the first and last. I am He that liveth and I was dead and behold I am alive for evermore and have the keys of hell and of death.' He speaks further: 'To him that overcometh vice I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.'"

"You are 103 years old, John, and you have overcome."

"He speaks further, Mabel, and says: 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna. And I will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. And he that overcometh and keepeth my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken into shivers.'"

"I can hear his voice crying, John, but I cannot distinguish the words of his mouth. What is he saying?"

"Behold I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

"What are you gazing at, John?"

"I am gazing to heaven, for the door of heaven is open and a voice, as it were of a trumpet, cries: 'Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter!'"

"And what do you see, John?"

"I see a throne set in heaven, and One sits on the throne and he is to look upon like a jasper and a sardian stone. And there is a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne are four and twenty seats; and upon

the seats I see four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment and on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceed lightnings and thunders and voices, and there are seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And I see a sea of glass like unto crystal. And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne are four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast is like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast has a face of a man, and the fourth beast is like a flying eagle. And the four beasts have each of them six wings about him and they are full of eyes within."

"And what do the beasts say, John?"

"Night and day they say: Holy, holy holy, Lord God Almighty. That was and is and is to come."

"And is to come . . .!"

A sudden cry of joy came from the lips of the sick man. As the warder started, Stirn cried:

"I see it, Mabel! I see the Lamb!"

"Where, John?"

"In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts and in the midst of the elders, stands the Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth unto all the earth."

"Sent forth to-day, John, sent forth unto all the earth . . .!"

"I hear harps, Mabel, and I see smoke rising round the throne and toward the rainbow and around Him that sits upon the throne whose face is like a jasper and a sardian stone. And the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fall down before the Lamb and say: 'Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof.'"

"What book, John?"

"The book with the seven seals, Mabel."

"Why is the Lamb worthy to open the seals of the book?"

"Because He will lead us to the water of life and God will wipe away all tears from our eyes."

"Is that true, John?"

"As true as the only God. And it is written: In those days shall men seek death and shall not find it and shall desire to die and death shall flee from them."

"Death shall flee from them, John, because they have a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue he has his name Apollyon."

"And under Him the people of the Holy City are trodden under foot forty and two months. But he will be cast out, the great dragon, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. He will be cast out into the earth and his angels with him."

"And will that happen, John?"

"It will happen; that it may be fulfilled as it is written. Such as are for the sword to the sword and such as are for the captivity to the captivity! But the victory of the Lamb will only be complete with the falling of Babylon and with the pouring out upon the earth of the seven vials of the wrath of God. Then will the saints enter into the new Jerusalem, called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and the wife of the Lamb has made herself ready."

"There is a light of understanding in your eyes, John. What do you see?"

"I see heaven opened and behold a white horse and he that sits upon him is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His

eyes are as a flame of fire and on his head are many crowns. And he has a name written that no man knoweth but himself; and he is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called The Word of God."

"Is he alone, John?"

"No, Mabel, for the armies which are in heaven follow him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

"And his weapons, John?"

"Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

"It will be a terrible harvest, John!"

"It will, Mabel. And now I see an angel that cries with a loud voice to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven: Come and gather yourselves together unto the succor of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of horses, and the flesh of all men both free and bond, both small and great. And I see the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army."

"Is the battle joined?"

"They fight, Mabel, and the beast is taken and with him the astrologer and the mighty man and the sorcerer which wrought miracles before the people and deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image."

"And what is the beast's fate?"

"The beast and the astrologer and the mighty man and the sorcerer are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant are slain with

the sword of him that sitteth upon the horse; and all the fowls are filled with their flesh."

"You have other visions, John. Tell me what you see."

"I see an angel come down from heaven having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hands. And he layeth hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and War, and he bindeth him for a thousand years. He casts him into the bottomless pit and locks him in."

"I see your eyes lighting with a wonderful light, John, as though you were looking upon the true blessedness of the blessed."

"Mabel, I see a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away, and there is no more sea. I see the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I hear a great voice out of heaven saying: Behold the tabernacle of God is with men and they shall be His people and He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death nor sorrow nor crying nor any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

"And what says He that sits upon the throne?"

"He says: Behold it is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst the fountain of the water of life. He that overcometh shall inherit all and I will be his God and he shall be my son."

"Who is this coming now, John? I hear steps."

"It is one of the angels which had the seven vials of the wrath of God."

"What does he say?"

"He says: Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

"And do you see her?"

"I am standing on a great and high mountain and I can see that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God and having the glory of God. Her light is like unto a stone most precious, even a jasper stone, clear as crystal. She has a wall great and high and twelve gates and at the gates twelve angels. And the wall has twelve foundations and in them the name of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the building of the wall is of jasper and the city is pure gold like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city are garnished with all manner of precious stones. And I see no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God lightens it and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor unto it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that will defile it, but only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

These were the madman's last words. He lay silent, and minute after minute passed without a sound being heard in the cell. At the end of a quarter of an hour the warder went to his patient, shook him, felt his pulse, listened to his heart, and then, going to the telephone, roused the director of the asylum.

"Oh, yes! Rieth, is it?" A sleepy voice came to him over the wire. "What is the matter?"

"I think the patient is dead, sir."

"Dead? All right, I'll come at once."

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